

# *Public Voices*

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# *Public Voices*

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# *Public Voices*

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## **Public Service in the Mind's Eye: Positive Images of Public Servants in Movies, TV Shows and Editorial Cartoons**

### **Symposium**

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Glenna Goodacre, architect. *Vietnam Women's Memorial*, National Mall, Washington, DC. Dedicated November 11, 1993. Photograph by Rhonda Sincavage. Used by permission.

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*Mordecai Lee*

American history suggests that our culture is anchored by a powerful mistrust of government. Even more so, the recent past has seen an intensification of this unremitting hostility toward American public administration in public opinion and popular culture. In this context, a symposium on positive images of public servants in pop culture is truly contrarian and, therefore, refreshingly different.

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largely elusive. Among the sparse literature centered on civil servants are studies that employ a case study approach or focus on a few films. In contrast, our research employs a large sample of 150 films. These films comprise the top ten box-office grossing films from 1992 through 2006; therefore we examine the films most likely to have been seen by a majority of movie-watching Americans. More than 60 percent of the films in our sample portray government as bad, inefficient, and incompetent. However, the data on more than 300 civil servants yield intriguing findings. Surprising, in light of the negative depiction of government, is the positive depiction of individual civil servants. Half of civil servants were positively portrayed, and only 40 percent were negatively depicted. Americans may view government negatively, but they see in film positive depictions of how individual civil servants can and do make a positive difference.

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# Panning for Gold: Finding a Few Nuggets of Positive Images of Government in American Pop Culture

*Mordecai Lee*

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Beginning with its first issue in 1993, *Public Voices* has been committed to filling voids in the scope and interests of refereed journals in public administration. One of these subjects was pop culture and the arts. As early as 1968, Waldo had observed that novels and fiction were relevant to the study of public administration. Art not only imitated life, his argument went, but sometimes life imitated art. Could we learn anything from art? However, significantly, Waldo's piece was neither published as a traditional academic book nor in a refereed journal, but rather as a mimeographed occasional monograph issued by UC-Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies (Waldo, 1968). This hinted at the inability of an academic field dominated by an orthodox power structure to deal with an unorthodox topic.

Picking up where Waldo left off, in the first article of *Public Voice's* debut issue founding Editor Marc Holzer wrote of the importance of the *image* of public administration in the external world and the need for the discipline to engage with it, rather than simply ignore such uninformed rantings as the views of fools. Holzer elaborated in detail on the negative image of public service in popular culture (Holzer, 1993). The same issue featured a description of the negative image of public administration in current movies, with the author finding a few – exceptions to be sure – positive images of government in film (Larkin, 1993).

Since then, the journal has kept its commitment to giving the devil his due, analyzing what popular culture has had to say (or, equally as important, not say) about the public sector. Nearly every issue has contained unorthodox entries within this rubric, such as original fiction and thoughtful essays. Delightfully, it turned the supposedly constricting straitjacket of peer review against itself, by demonstrating repeatedly that the refereeing process was not an impermeable barrier for untraditional subjects. Rather, all along it had been the stuffy and dogmatic reviewers and equally snobbish journal editors. *Public Voices* has published articles, all recommended for publication after blind review, on such subjects as the images and stereotypes of government from across the gamut of pop culture's venues, including movies, television and novels. For example, a sympo-

sium on historical fiction, a topic far from the mainstream of academic legitimacy, was published in 2005 with four entries, all accepted after surviving peer-review. (Disclosure: I was the symposium's editor.) Now, continuing those explorations as had been promised in its premier issue and consistently delivered since, *Public Voices* asks if, after more than 1½ decades since its founding, has the (literal) picture changed at all? Are there any examples of positive images of public service in the arts in the new millennium?

As the first decade of the 21st century was coming to a close, the conventional wisdom about the intense negativity of US public opinion towards government is sometimes viewed as an out of the ordinary situation and that public institutions needed to work to *restore* citizens' trust in government. Based on this given narrative, the decade was dominated by events that led to extraordinary civic disenchantment with government, including the (administrative) incompetence of George W. Bush's eight-year presidency, policy gridlock in Washington, intense political partisanship making "compromise" a taboo approach to resolving public policy problems, the worldwide financial collapse, the federal government's inept response to Hurricane Katrina, intelligence unpreparedness that contributed to 9/11, and the poorly planned and managed US military occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This conventional wisdom, of the need to *reestablish* the credibility of public administration, implied that the default position of American public opinion was of trust in government. For example, in 1991 Simon and Thompson wrote a new introduction for the public administration textbook they had written with Smithburg in 1950 (Simon, Smithburg and Thompson, 1950). Looking back, they observed, "The period from 1933 to 1950 was in many ways a Golden Age of the Federal government" (Simon and Thompson, 1991, xviii). Yet, even if true, seventeen years of a good image of government in almost a century is not normalcy. Just the opposite, I've argued elsewhere (Lee, 2001). American history suggests that our culture is anchored by a powerful mistrust of government. The War of Independence was fought against governmental power. The initial national government, the Confederation, deliberately had a weak and ineffective central government. Even the government created by the Constitution was designed to protect citizens from a powerful government. The Madisonian system of checks and balances was supposedly constructed to prevent the new national government from ever becoming too powerful and tyrannical. (For a contrarian interpretation of the purpose of the Constitution, see Wills, 1999.)

Therefore, American hostility toward government is not merely ancient history or a modern aberration. Any major public official today who makes an appearance at a sporting event risks being booed by the crowd for no particular reason except his or her association with government. The monologues of the hosts of the late-night TV shows are probably the true barometers of popular culture. They consistently joke about government and – equally consistently – get laughs. Kvetching about government is a popular American pastime. A recent book captured that phenomenon with the title-question of *What Is It about Government that Americans Dislike?* (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2001). Oddly, however, its chapter authors (mostly political scientists) were preoccupied with public opinion toward elected officials and the judiciary, ignoring public admin-

istration. Almost all Americans (our mothers excepted?) enjoy the popular national pastime of criticizing government and the subgenus of bashing bureaucrats. So, notwithstanding the contents of this symposium, American government will *never* be viewed as an honorable calling. There will never be public acceptance of a professional administrative elite as has been, perhaps exaggeratingly, in British and other Commonwealth countries.

Still, the recent past has seen an intensification of this unremitting hostility toward American public administration in public opinion and popular culture. In the 4th edition of his *Case for Bureaucracy*, Goodsell noted, “In the popular culture, bureaucracy’s image is that of a huge, impersonal organization” (2004, 141). This negative image is often depicted even more ominously, seemingly as evil incarnate:

Our media and politicians tell us that public bureaucracy is bloated in size, inefficient compared to business, a stifling place to work, indifferent to ordinary citizens, the problem rather than the solution. *Bureaucrats*—with the word uttered in contempt—are alleged in all quarters to be lazy, incompetent, devious, and even dangerous. (Goodsell, 2004, 3, emphasis in original)

It is in this context that a symposium on positive images of public servants in pop culture is truly contrarian and, therefore, refreshingly different. If the media’s definition of news is “what is unusual” or “what is surprising,” then the subject of this symposium is indeed news. Heretofore, outside the safety of *Public Voices*, there have only been a handful of examples of earlier public administration researchers identifying positive images of public service in popular culture. For example, in 1995, Goodsell and Murray edited a volume on *Public Administration Illuminated and Inspired by the Arts* (Goodsell and Murray, 1995). Two years later, Holzer continued his interest in the issue by noting a few examples of such positive images on stamps, murals, posters and movies (1997, 205-07). In 2001, Lee and Paddock were able to identify 20 movies that depicted the bureaucrat as a hero (2001). Those 20 movies focused on public administrators as managers, carefully excluding heroic front-line service deliverers and military leaders.

Credit the editors of *Public Voices* with indefatigable optimism. Not quite sure if they’d receive any submissions, in 2008, Editor-in-Chief Marc Holzer and Managing Editor Iryna Illiash decided to cast their bread (crumbs) upon the waters with a call for manuscripts on positive images of public service in popular culture. Mixing aquatic metaphors, this writer’s initial reactions were that they were either trying to swim up Niagara Falls or had dropped a stone down a well so deep that they might never hear a splash. Yet, against this perception of very long odds, they have succeeded. They deserve plaudits from the skeptics. Hence, the short answer to the symposium’s theme is that, yes, indeed, pop culture has provided a few nuggets of gold in its raging river of negativism. (OK, enough with the water metaphors.) Maintaining their commitment to a rigorous academic refereeing process, peer reviewers recommended five pieces for publication. Unplanned, they nicely cover a good mix of the venues of pop culture, namely movies, television, and editorial cartoons.

The first entry in the symposium, by Michelle Pautz and Laura Roselle, turns the methodology of much of the extant literature upside down and improves the academic rigor of this kind of research. The convention for analysis of public administration's pop culture image up to now has generally followed the sequence of identifying a set of relevant films (or TV episodes, etc.) through horizon-scanning methods and then analyzing how they depicted government. This approach has the potential of incomplete selectivity, namely that the set being studied would not be comprehensive and therefore the generalizations of limited benefit. In an effort to increase the methodological rigor, this article nicely works in the opposite direction. The research scope began with *all* movies that were the top ten grossers from 1992 through 2006. From that universal set, the research then creates a subset of movies that depict government employees (at any level, not just managers). This methodology strengthens the validity of the generalizations that emerge.

The second contribution to the symposium performs the dual function of identifying veritable depictions of public administration in pop culture and then linking its examples to pedagogy. Michael Popejoy examines in detail a few episodes of the television series *West Wing*. He carefully points out the verisimilitude of these episodes, covering several different aspects of public governance. Without apology, he takes the pragmatic approach of "if you can't beat them, join them." It is understandable that our students are more engaged by moving pictures than what they probably consider to be boring classroom activities and reading assignments. So, Popejoy suggests some specific examples of fictional television that vividly portray messages we are trying to get across to students. Go watch TV! Go watch a movie! They might be so surprised to hear an instructor say this that it might capture their attention. And I imagine the subsequent classroom discussions would be much more robust, perhaps even some friendly argumentation that is not normally encountered.

Of course, using movies and television for pedagogic reasons in public administration is no longer unorthodox. The *Journal of Public Affairs Education* (JPAE) has occasionally published articles on that. Following up, Popejoy makes the point strongly that we need to break out of the reflexive academic pedantry of ruining a good thing by unctuously focusing mostly on what is not accurate in the arts. Fiction can be as teachable as fact, he reminds us. *West Wing* conveys the feel of important decision points and in government. Students will get it. That's what educators should be aiming for. Moving pictures are better than most in conveying that kind of public administration reality. That it's fiction and entertainment is merely an unimportant quibble.

The next article, by Richard Schwester, focuses on the lessons for public management from some of the major WWII movies that have attained the status of classics. Again, a deflating point made by some of our colleagues is that military leadership is qualitatively different from leadership in a civilian agency (especially in peace-time) and that combat heroism is not the same as leadership. But, like Popejoy, Schwester sweeps aside convention and gives excellent examples of what public administration lessons these movie audiences absorb, whether consciously or unconsciously. Similarly, Schwester's focus is a good reminder that public administration has, oddly, generally ignored military administration. Perhaps his article will help pull the administration of

the armed forces back into our discipline's purview. Finally, while Schwester does not expressly orient his inquiry to pedagogy, there is much that he presents that would help us reach students. I'd suggest that reaching is teaching when it comes to the powerful impact of watching a good movie.

Shifting media, Tony Carrizales examines in the fourth item in the symposium examples of positive images of public servants in editorial cartoons in the years just before and just after 9/11. This comparison is important because in the first flush of the reaction to 9/11, the image of the public servant soared, especially of the first responders. Carrizales is careful to identify relevant cartoons that appeared as long as two years after the attacks, as well as the two years before, to overcome any brief aberration in trends. Indeed, he found his share of the predictable negative depictions of public servants, but positive ones, too. It is the latter that he focuses in detail and examines in more depth. As exploratory research, he invites more systematic inquiries into the subject. That would be most welcome.

The last piece in the symposium is mine and explores the cinematic depictions of central role of public law to public administration. After all, nothing a public servant does can be done without the authorization of law. That got me to wondering if there were examples of positive and veritable cinematic depictions of the cliché phrase "How a bill becomes a law." The latter is the eye-glazing and boring civics-class approach by which most Americans learn about lawmaking. It's about as exciting as watching paint dry. Yet another reason why Americans think so poorly of the public sector. Shifting from civics class to Hollywood, I wondered what Americans have learned from pop culture about lawmaking? Specifically, what is Hollywood's version of how Congress makes laws? I found some interesting examples, a few quite well-known (such as *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*) and others much more obscure. Somewhat to my surprise, in most cases these movies had varying degrees of verisimilitude. Greater in a few examples, less in others – but almost always *some*. A fair generalization seemed that movieland's version of federal lawmaking was close enough to provide an element of positive and accurate depictions of the process in Congress, notwithstanding the low esteem with which Americans (and pop culture) hold Congress as an institution.

I was gratified by the Editors' request to provide this introduction to the symposium. However, I hope it is clear that the credit for all the hard work goes to them, not me. I was not, in any traditional sense, the editor of the symposium. Ms. Illiash brought me in relatively late in the process, after having already shouldered almost all the editorial duties related to such a project. She did all the heavy lifting that symposium editors usually do and therefore deserves the public credit. By that point, my contribution had already been approved for publication through the routine blind-refereeing process. I had no editorial role whatsoever in the review of my article or the decision to accept it for publication. After accepting the invitation to write this introduction, I then served as a reviewer of two of the other entries that were subsequently submitted and eventually made it into the symposium. Naturally, Ms. Illiash kept from me the identity of the authors of those two contributions until after both had been recommended for publication by verdict of all the reviewers and the time had come to prepare this introduction.



Finally, a look to the future. This symposium has documented that there are *occasional* positive depictions of public servants in the mass media. Now that this basic question has been answered and confirmed, I hope that future researchers will continue exploring these and other related themes. For example, all five entries in this symposium focus on American pop culture. Surely there are some interesting examples from other countries and cultures, whether English speaking or not? Or, is the antipathy to government in the US particularistic, just another case of American exceptionalism? Is there a different, even opposite, artistic depiction of public administration in the cultures (pop or otherwise) of other countries? Another direction for future inquiries might give greater emphasis on improving the methodological rigor of such studies. Are there other social science and related research methods that can increase the validity and acceptability of pop culture studies in public administration?

Shifting orientation, the symposium identified positive images in three media: television, movies and newspaper cartoons. What about other venues, such as commercials, major internet and blogging sites, and the burgeoning social media? Another examination could be intersectorial, comparing and contrasting the images (whether positive or negative) of the public, business and nonprofit sectors. Finally, another path of inquiry would be to research if there is a quantitative or qualitative way to measure (or at least identify) *trends*? Over time – past, present and future – is it possible to determine if positive images of public service are occurring more frequently, about the same or less frequently? Is it possible to discern differences in media and venue? For example, are the few examples of positive images more likely (albeit, still rare) in one particular art form, say, art house movies, than another, such as national TV? Essentially, is American pop culture divisible or largely unitary?

I'd speculate that there are no trends, rather it always has been and always will be a flat line. These positive images are perhaps random occurrences, somewhat akin to winning the lottery. Sure, it happens, but rarely. Very rarely. These are the few exceptions that merely prove the rule. But I'd guess that the Editors of *Public Voices* would be betting against me, again. Their optimism about images of public service in pop culture has proved me wrong before. I hope that future researchers into this topic will do it again and again. Here's hoping.

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# Are They Ready for Their Close-Up? Civil Servants and Their Portrayal in Contemporary American Cinema

Michelle C. Pautz and Laura Roselle

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Norma Desmond famously says in Billy Wilder's *Sunset Blvd.* (1950), "All right, Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my closeup."<sup>1</sup> Since then, this phrase has been uttered countless times to ensure the camera does not start rolling until everyone is ready. But all are not afforded the opportunity to get ready and civil servants fall squarely into this category. We know that government bureaucrats are among those individuals that Americans love to hate and attacks on the civil service come from a plethora of sources.<sup>2</sup> And because of the ability of film (as well as other narrative forms) to influence perceptions and stereotypes about government (c.f. McCurdy 1995; Holzer and Slater 1995; Lichter, Lichter, and Amundson 2000; Holley and Lutte 2000), it is important to understand how civil servants are portrayed in American film.

Unfortunately, the empirical exploration of civil servants in film remains understudied. The existing research on the portrayal of government in film is inadequate for several reasons. First, a large scale examination of a wide range of films has not been conducted to ascertain how films portray government, and specifically, bureaucrats. In addition, most of the scholarship focuses on small samples or employs case study methodology that looks at a handful of predetermined films to examine the different views of government offered by Hollywood. Finally, often the films that are profiled are rather obscure and one would have difficulty finding many individuals who have actually heard of the films examined, let alone seen them. Thus, the question that arises is how is government, and more specifically civil servants, portrayed in the most popular films in the United States?

In an effort to more fully explore the depictions that contemporary American film presents of

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<sup>1</sup> For those readers who have not seen Billy Wilder's classic Hollywood-on-Hollywood film, aging silent screen star Norma Desmond believes (in the final scene of the film when she utters her famous line) that she is shooting her next film with Cecil B. DeMille, rather than being arrested on homicide charges.

<sup>2</sup> See Goodsell (2004) for a concise but comprehensive overview for the disdain of government bureaucrats.

government and civil servants, this paper endeavors to address many of the omissions of the existing literature. The films selected for study are the top ten domestic box office grossing films in the United States from 1992 through 2006. These 150 films are the films most likely to have been seen by the majority of Americans. As a result of this large sample, the films included are the ones that have the greatest exposure to the movie-going public in the United States; accordingly, a holistic assessment of how Hollywood routinely portrays civil servants is possible. In the end, we find that the U.S. government is frequently depicted in a negative light, but that civil servants are a different story, especially in the last five years. Civil servants are, more often than not, presented as intelligent, well-trained, and efficient.

This paper first presents an overview of perceptions and how they are informed by various narrative forms, particularly film. Then it turns to the treatment of fiction and film in the public administration literature and considers the sparse research to date that explores how government is portrayed in film. After establishing the context for our research, the methods are presented and the findings from 150 films that depict more than 300 civil servants are summarized. Finally, it concludes with a discussion of our findings and their implications.

## Perceptions

Perceptions come from the various ways individuals make sense of their surroundings over time and perceptions define how individuals think about the world around them. Each individual forms and maintains perceptions about a variety of topics and experiences. What a person thinks about an individual or a situation will impact the way he/she deals with that individual or how he/she approaches a similar situation in the future. For example, if a citizen frequents his local post office several times a month and always encounters long lines that move very slowly and clerks that seem unable to accomplish the simplest of tasks, he is likely to assume that all post offices employ slow and incompetent clerks. In essence, perceptions help people form or reinforce their own biases.

For the purposes of this paper, perceptions of government are of particular interest. It is virtually indisputable that Americans have negative perceptions of their government and the majority of citizens have held such beliefs for quite some time. "...Americans are taught throughout our lives, from hearth and home on through school and career, that our government is a sea of waste, a swamp of incompetence, a mountain of unchecked power, an endless plain of mediocrity" (Goodsell 2004, 3). Few would challenge Goodsell's articulation of the average American's perceptions of government. Americans have great disdain for their government in general and for the individuals that carry out the work of government. Politicians are often looked at warily and civil servants do not fair any better. In particular, "[b]ureaucrats – with the word uttered in contempt – are alleged in all quarters to be lazy, incompetent, devious, and even dangerous" (Goodsell 3, emphasis original). These views are so commonplace, few endeavor to challenge them. Goodsell (2004) is one exception and refutes the pervasive stereotype of the inept and idle civil servant. However, while Goodsell makes a sound counterargument to these common percep-

tions, he does not explore in great detail the sources of those perceptions. The sources of these perceptions are vast, but one important source is the narrative.

## Perceptions and Film

Narratives, or stories, are relayed through a variety of media, such as books, plays, movies, and television, and countless Americans engage them every year. Not only do narratives entertain, they also influence people on a host of subjects. The ability of narratives to influence may have little to do with the accuracy of the reality they depict; therefore, the ideas that audience members take away may in turn shape individuals' perceptions. Narratives help shape perceptions (c.f. Kolker 1999).<sup>3</sup> In particular, movies can influence perceptions and behaviors about political culture (Franklin 2006, 6) and government more generally (Ortega-Liston 2000). Although all narrative forms can impact perceptions about government, film is of particular interest for several reasons.

First, since the advent of the cinema in the 1890s, through the nickelodeon era, to the dawn of cinemascope, and the modern era of multiplexes and movies on demand in American living rooms, film reaches more Americans than other forms of entertainment (Sklar 1994; Cook 1996; Vogel 1998). Indeed, 1.47 billion movie tickets were purchased in 2007 alone and this does not account for the number of movies watched at home or in other venues (Motion Picture Association of America 2007, 2). Even in economic down turns, both past and present, Americans still flock to the movies (c.f. Cieply and Barnes 2009; Pautz 2002). As a result, movies reach a large section of the American population across demographics and socioeconomic status unlike many other narrative forms. Holzer and Slater (1995) note that one of the reasons that films can have such an effect on public perceptions is due to "the vast size of the audience" (77).

Second, it is important to focus on film particularly in conjunction with the perceptions of government portrayed because film reaches young people especially. Fifty-five percent of the moviegoers in the U.S. in 2007 were under the age of 39 (MPAA 2007, 2). Additionally, the same age group is most likely to see movies frequently (at least once per month) (MPAA 2). It may be argued that the perceptions of younger Americans are more pliable than older Americans; therefore, the influence of films on perceptions of government may be more significant.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, it is arguable that film has the greatest impact on perceptions of the narrative forms. "The visual image is encompassing, immersing. It allows for the total suspension of disbelief..." (Holzer and Slater 1995, 77). "Of the arts, the cinematic expe-

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<sup>3</sup> An important point worth considering is whether narratives, in particular film, fundamentally create perceptions and are the basis for views about government *or* if narratives and film reinforce existing perceptions and mirror current views of government. This question of causality or directionality is significant; however, it is beyond the scope of this paper. Regardless of the position one takes on the aforementioned, the focus of this research on the portrayal of civil servants in contemporary American cinema and its findings can inform both viewpoints. For a more thorough consideration of this question, please see Franklin (2006) (particularly the Introduction) and Holzer and Slater (1995).

rience is among the most psychologically persuasive” (Lee and Paddock 2001). In other words, film has the ability to completely consume its audience and occupy more senses than many other narrative forms because the senses of sight and sound are engaged while watching a film.<sup>4</sup>

Political science has a sizable body of scholarship exploring film and politics; however, much of that research focuses on the parallels between politics and film, the influence of films on political culture, and the depiction of politicians in film (c.f. Franklin 2006; Neve 1992; Gianos 1999). However, in reaction to the pervasive negative perceptions about government, particularly bureaucrats, we are keenly interested in how civil servants are depicted in American film. More specifically, we want to determine whether or not “bureaucrat bashing” is commonplace in contemporary American film. Therefore, we turn to public administration to explore how civil servants are portrayed.

### **Civil Servants and Film**

Public administration literature has long looked to various narrative forms to examine how government is portrayed (c.f. Kroll 1965; Waldo 1968; McCurdy 1995). While Goodsell and Murray (1995) note the importance of the arts to public administration, the chapters in their edited volume describe the frequent negative stereotypes employed by the arts in their depictions of government. In his broad look at fiction, McCurdy (1995) laments that “[p]artly because of the relentless message of imaginative authors, distrust of governmental institutions has become deeply ingrained in American culture” (McCurdy 504). Additionally, McCurdy goes on to say that attacking the government has “...prove[n] to be a certain method for enlisting audience sympathy in the United States” (504). In addition to these broad examinations, there has been some, albeit limited, study of the portrayal of civil servants in film.

Generally, civil servants appear to be negatively portrayed in American film. Holzer and Slater (1995) found “[v]irtually all depictions [of the bureaucracy] rework stereotypes to excess...[and] the attack is ceaseless and merciless” (76). “Movies, in short, have reinforced the public’s longstanding, poor image of government” (Holzer and Slater 85). Holley and Lutte (2000) make similar conclusions and go one step further to argue that Hollywood contributes to the negative perceptions about public administrators and their performance. In an effort to further investigate the ways civil servants are portrayed, some research devises categories of civil servants based on their depictions in film. For instance, Wielde and Schultz (2007) examine 40 movies to yield several distinct types of civil servants: Monstercrat, BlackHatocrat, Obsessocrat, Herocrat, Ethicrat, and Romanticrat. Through examining films that date back to 1940, Wielde and Schultz found that not all films portray civil servants negatively and the depiction of civil servants is more complicated than simply a positive or negative portrait.

Some research takes a different approach and proactively seeks films that portray government in

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<sup>4</sup> The cultivation literature, while focused on television, does suggest that when audiences enjoy media content, cognitive processes have less effect and cultivation effects may be more pronounced. (Nabi and Kremer 2004, 304).

a favorable light. For instance, Lee and Paddock (2001) sought films that depict “bureaucrat heroes” and identified 20 films based on their criteria. It is worth noting that among their 20 films, almost half are more than 30 years old and many of the films were not very successful at the box office. Lee and Paddock found that most of their bureaucrat heroes wore uniforms (largely military or law enforcement) and most of the heroes defied their agencies to be heroic.

Still other research looks for what films can teach about public administration, particularly for students. Ortega-Liston (2000) explores four films, *Nell*, *Absence of Malice*, *Norma Rae*, and *Patton*, for their relevance to the study of public administration. Holley and Lutte (2000) examine two films, *Ghostbusters* and *A Thousand Heroes*, and make the case that government should do more to counteract its negative image in film by being more proactive. Indeed Stainbun (1997) chronicles the efforts of the federal government to be increasingly accommodating to moviemakers.

This brief survey of existing research on the depiction of civil servants in film is intriguing and sparks debate; however, it also highlights several methodological concerns. First, much of the literature appears to take non-random samples of film and this can be problematic. Although the desire to seek out films that portray civil servants positively can be informative, it is difficult to ascertain their viewership. Caution should accompany broad conclusions about the depiction of civil servants in film if the films are decades old and they are relatively obscure and not commercially successful. Finally, most studies sample only a few films and do not allow for a more comprehensive view of American film and how civil servants are portrayed. As a result, we seek to examine how civil servants are portrayed in contemporary American cinema and outline a methodology below that endeavors to overcome some of the aforementioned obstacles.

## Methodology

Based on these limitations of existing research, we have elected to study the top ten grossing films<sup>5</sup> annually from 1992 through 2006. Since we are most interested in the portrayal of civil servants and the possible effects on the average movie-going American, we focus on the top ten grossing films as they represent the films most likely seen by the average American. In other words, the top grossing films annually are the movies most likely to have been seen by the largest audience.

We developed a coding instrument to address the following research questions.

- R1: What genres of films are included in the sample of most popular films?
- R2: What is the overall depiction of government in these films?
- R3: What are the demographic characteristics of the civil servants depicted?
- R4: What types of civil servants are found in these films?
- R5: What character attributes are associated with the civil servants?
- R6: What actions are the civil servants involved in?

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<sup>5</sup> Data on the top ten grossing films were compiled from domestic receipts reported on ShowBizData.com ([www.showbizdata.com](http://www.showbizdata.com); accessed 13 October 2009); please see Appendix 2.



Civil servants were defined to include government employees at all levels and in all contexts, including imaginary and futuristic realms, such as those of *Harry Potter* and *Star Wars*. We did not include elected officials, law enforcement, or military personnel. Elected officials are not civil servants by definition, even though the two categories are often erroneously collapsed, and politicians have often been examined in various research contexts (c.f. Gianos 1998). Similarly, we negated law enforcement and military personnel because we believed that perceptions of these individuals are much more complex and both categories are frequently portrayed as overly heroic and are all too often the antagonists.<sup>6</sup>

A coding instrument was developed to collect data to address our research questions. We compiled information on a film's genre by relying on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb)<sup>7</sup> and recording the first genre label assigned to each film. Demographic characteristics included sex, age, ethnicity, and nationality of each civil servant. The type of civil servants was determined by coding the agency or job duties of the civil servant. Character attributes and actions were coded in an open-ended manner and included adjectives that were used by other characters in the film to describe the civil servants and their actions or practices. Finally, the coding instrument asked for an overall assessment of government (positive or negative) along with an explanation, and the names and descriptions of protagonists and antagonists.

Undergraduate students were trained in our coding instrument and given a test of coding one movie to see if they could follow directions and use the coding instrument appropriately. Inter-coder reliability was adequate with slightly more than 10 percent, or 16 of the 150 films, coded by two different coders. Each movie was coded by two coders and we reconciled the discrepancies. A copy of the coding sheet is available in Appendix 1.

Our hypotheses for the research questions were:

- H1: Action films would make up the highest percentage of films with civil servants.
- H2: The depiction of government (in general) would be negative in these films.
- H3: The demographic features of the civil servants depicted in the films would mirror the actual demographics of the civil service.
- H4: Locally based civil servants (teachers, district attorneys, etc.) would be more prevalent in these films because more people interact with these civil servants. After 9/11 we expected a rise in the number of civil servants in Homeland Security, CIA, Secret Service, and local fire fighters
- H5: Negative characteristics will be associated with the majority of civil servants depicted in these films. This would correspond with the negative image of civil servants discussed in the scholarly literature.
- H6: Civil servants will be depicted as not doing their jobs and/or engaging in corrupt, questionable, or negative behaviors.

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<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the portrayal of the military in film has also been frequently studied.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.imdb.com>; accessed 13 October 2009.

## Background on Films

### Genres

Before exploring the portrayal of government, first consider some general information about the 150 films studied, specifically movie genre. As was expected, just over half (51 percent) of the films in the sample are action and/or adventure films. Comedies comprise the next largest portion with 23 percent of the films. A more complete examination of the genres can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Films by Genres (N=150)**

Genre	Percentage (N)
Action and/or Adventure	51.3 (77)
Comedy	23.3 (35)
Animation	10.7 (16)
Drama	6.7 (10)
Family	2.7 (4)
Miscellaneous Genres	5.3 (8)

While a complete list of the films examined in this study can be found in Appendix 2, a brief review of the list provides some general insights into the types of films most popular with moviegoers. Action/adventure films complete with superheroes (such as *Batman Begins* and *Spiderman*) and lots of special effects (such as *Pirates of the Caribbean* and the *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy) are frequently among the top box office grossing films each year along with comedies that appeal to adult audiences (such as *Austin Powers* and *There's Something About Mary*) and comedies that are appropriate for families (such as *Cars* and *Shrek*). Typically these films depict attractive characters in roles that are easily classified as “good” or “bad.” These observations are not surprising given that the majority of moviegoers in the U.S. are under age 40. Only a handful of top-performing films at the box office provide more serious subject matter and lack the escapism that most of these films offer the audience (such as *Good Will Hunting* or the *Schindler's List*).

Out of the 150 films in our sample, 95 films included civil servants that were coded in this study. Stated differently, 63 percent of films contained at least one character that was a civil servant. This suggests that moviegoers had a good chance of seeing civil servants portrayed in film. In these 95 films, there were 303 civil servants with the following breakdown by genre (Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**Films with Civil Servants by Genres (N=95)**

Genre	Percentage (N)
Action and/or Adventure	55.8 (53)
Comedy	22.1 (20)
Animation	12.6 (11)
Drama	5.3 (5)
Miscellaneous Genres	6.3 (6)

Most of the films (55.8 percent) that depicted civil servants were action and/or adventure movies, as expected. This pattern was even more prevalent in post-9/11 films: 60 percent of films in the post-9/11 period (2002-2006) were action and/or adventure films while during the pre-9/11 period, action and/or adventure films comprised 47 percent.

### **General Depictions of Government**

We expected, and found, a negative depiction of government in general. Overall, out of 105 films that contained some depiction of government, 40 percent (N=42) of the films portrayed government as competent, efficient, and/or good, whereas 60 percent (N=63) depicted the government as inefficient, incompetent, and/or bad, and 3 percent were mixed. Some of the films that positively depicted government include *Cars*, *Cliffhanger*, *Speed*, and *Independence Day*. By contrast, *A Time to Kill*, *The Fugitive*, and *Pocahontas* portrayed government negatively. This pattern was similar for both pre-9/11 and post-9/11 time periods, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**General Depictions of Government (N=105)<sup>8</sup>**

	<b>Competent, Good, Efficient Government</b>	<b>Incompetent, Bad, Inefficient Government</b>	<b>Mixed Depiction</b>
<b>Films Released Pre-9/11 (1992-2001)</b>	26 (38%)	41 (59%)	2 (3%)
<b>Films Released Post-9/11 (2002-2006)</b>	13 (36%)	22(61%)	1 (3%)

Further analysis finds that of the 63 films that depicted government as incompetent, bad, and/or inefficient, 67 percent of those films (N= 42) indicate that the negative portrayal of the government is because of the “system” rather than individuals. Numerous films are illustrative of this finding; for instance, the government is depicted as inefficient and incompetent in *Batman Begins* because they are unable to stem the crime wave sweeping Gotham City. The inability of the government to provide safety for its citizens ultimately compels Bruce Wayne to become Batman. In *Chicago*, Roxie gets away with her crimes because of the ineptitude of the criminal justice system.

By comparison, only a third of the films (N=21) that portrayed government in a negative light did so based on the actions of an individual or individuals. For example, in *Mrs. Doubtfire* Robin Williams’ character is denied custody of his children by a “mean judge” and is subjected to unfriendly child custody officials. In *Wayne’s World* several police officers are routinely ridiculed because of their behavior. These findings were not particularly striking to us since government is frequently ridiculed – by citizens, the media, and elected officials - as a collective. Indeed, we are frequently socialized in the U.S. to view the entire governmental system in a negative way.

<sup>8</sup> The sample size is 105 because 45 films did not have a sufficient portrayal of government for the coders to assess government’s overall depiction.

The films that portrayed government positively were also studied to determine if the positive portrayal was a result of government as a whole or the result of individuals' actions. Unlike the negative depiction of government where the results were overwhelming in one category, these films were about evenly split between individuals and the governmental system being responsible for the positive depiction.

The depiction of government was also considered in light of the different film genres in our sample. Of the 77 action and/or adventure films, a majority (N=42) of them portrayed government negatively whereas the other two most common genres (comedy and animation) were evenly split in terms of how many of them portrayed government positively or negatively. One should not be too surprised to find that most action and/or adventure films portrayed government negatively as these films are most likely to have clear protagonists and antagonists. For instance, in *The Day After Tomorrow*, government foolishly ignores warnings of imminent, dramatic changes in the weather that are going to have catastrophic effects; or in *The Fugitive*, the government wrongfully convicts Richard Kimble in his wife's murder and resists Kimble's efforts to prove otherwise.

## **Civil Servants Depicted in Contemporary American Films**

### ***Demographics of Civil Servants***

Three hundred and three civil servants representing a diverse array of characteristics were coded from the sample of 150 films. A comparison of the pre- and post-9/11 period shows that there were more civil servants depicted per film in the post-9/11 period. The average number of civil servants in the pre-9/11 period was 1.86 per movie and in the post-9/11 period there were 2.34 per movie. An overwhelming majority of the civil servants were male (84 percent, N=255). Moreover, 80 percent of the civil servants were Caucasian with African-American civil servants a distant second with 6 percent. The remaining 14 percent of civil servants ranged from Arab to Hispanic to penguins and apes (primarily in the animation films). Age was another characteristic we examined; we found that 50 percent of the civil servants coded were in their 30's or 40's with an additional 20 percent in their 50's. Although the ages of civil servants spanned from 20's to 100's, the vast majority were in their 30's to 50's. In addition to ethnicity, it is also interesting to note that 67 percent of the civil servants were Americans.

A frequent topic in public administration literature is whether or not the civil service is representative of the American citizenry; for our purposes, we have extended this inquiry to determine whether or not civil servants in our sample are representative of actual civil servants. Because of data limitations, we used statistics from the federal civil service only. Based on the most recent data from OPM (2004), the 303 civil servants in our study are not representative of the federal civil service. The ratio of male to female civil servants is much closer (56 percent male, 44 percent female) as compared to the disproportionately high number of male civil servants depicted in the movies (84 percent). In both the films and the federal civil service, Caucasians make up the largest ethnic group; however, in the federal civil service the figure is not quite as high (69 percent)

as compared to Hollywood's depiction (80 percent). By contrast to the aforementioned demographics, age is the most accurately portrayed demographic characteristics in our sample. Forty-nine percent of federal civil servants are in their 30's and 40's, as compared to 50 percent of the civil servants in film. In sum, the civil servants portrayed in the films studied here are more frequently male and Caucasian than in the federal civil service.

After establishing the types of films included in this study and some demographics of the 303 civil servants, consider the types of civil servants most frequently portrayed and their behaviors.

### ***Types of Civil Servants and Their Actions***

A diverse assortment of civil servants is represented in the films in this study with no single type representing a majority of civil servants depicted.<sup>9</sup> Teachers were the most frequent type of civil servant, accounting for approximately 13 percent (N=39) of all civil servants as hypothesized. Interestingly, a majority of the teachers were male (N=24); one might have expected a majority of teachers to be females. Members of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) represented about 10 percent and foreign intelligence officials about nine percent. As might be expected more than 80 percent of the C.I.A. officials and 88 percent of the foreign intelligence officials were male. Indeed, women did not dominate any category of common civil servants. This may not be too surprising since women were overwhelmingly outnumbered as civil servants (female civil servants N=47). In terms of types of civil servants pre and post 9/11, there were disproportionate majorities of C.I.A. officials, astronauts, White House staffers, and advisors to leaders in pre 9/11 films; no ready explanation accounts for these findings. Table 4 contains a more comprehensive look at the most common type of civil servants found in the sample of films.

**Table 4**  
**Common Types of Civil Servants Portrayed**

Type	Percentage (N)
Teacher	12.9 (39)
Central Intelligence Agency	10.2 (31)
Foreign intelligence officials	8.6 (26)
First responders (e.g. EMS, fire fighters)	5.6 (17)
Astronauts	4.3 (13)
White House staffers	4.0 (12)
Advisors to leaders	3.6 (11)
Judges/Justices	3.6 (11)

Certain types of civil servants seemed to be common in films that portrayed government positively and negatively. For instance, a majority of C.I.A. officials (68 percent) can be found in films that depicted government in a negative manner. Films such as *Clear and Present Danger*, *Mission: Impossible*, and the Bourne films depict C.I.A. officials in movies that have a negative portrayal of government. In *The Bourne Supremacy*, former C.I.A. operative Jason Bourne is

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<sup>9</sup> The types of civil servants portrayed in the films reflect an inductive categorization rather than the use of an existing categorization.

ruthlessly hunted by his former employer. By contrast, 100 percent of the astronauts and 67 percent of the teachers were found in movies that showed government positively. For example, films such as *Apollo 13* and *Armageddon* revolved around heroic astronauts that were either displaying courage and patriotism during the Cold War or saving the planet from an imminent asteroid strike.

### **Characters' Attributes**

While depictions of government were decidedly negative, this is not the case when individual civil servants are examined. As a first cut at determining whether or not individuals were depicted as positive or negative characters, we categorized the coding of each character generally. Specifically, we looked at the adjectives describing the character - such as brave, evil, professional, incompetent, and so forth - and the actions of each character - such as adhered to the law, took a bribe, etcetera. Coders were asked to write adjectives and describe a civil servant's behavior without prompting so that the coders would not be cued by a preconceived list of descriptors or actions. Then we categorized if the characters were depicted in a positive, negative, or neutral manner. Of 303 characters, 151, or 50 percent, were positively shown, 118 or 40 percent were negatively depicted, and 11 percent were not coded as either.<sup>10</sup>

The following breakdown in Table 5 shows the specific adjectives used to describe the characters. This list only represents the most important characteristics for which each character was coded. It does not, for example, suggest that all characters who might be seen as strict were coded as strict - if that was a minor or less important attribute as determined by the coders. This list should give a broad view of how characters were most generally portrayed.

**Table 5**  
**Attributes of Civil Servant Characters**

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Good looking/fit	19
Knowledgeable/wise/smart	18
Dangerous/evil/corrupt	14
Friendly/approachable	13
Professional/follows the rules	10
Serious/dedicated	9
Caring/loving	8
Strict/stern	8
Loyal/concerned	7
Fearful/cowardly	6
Authoritative/powerful	5
Frantic/hurried/nervous	5
Self-assured/arrogant	5
Brave/heroic	5
Funny/humorous	4
Organized/observant	3

<sup>10</sup> Percentages add to 101 because of rounding.



Many of the civil servants portrayed in the film – especially those who were not the antagonists – were depicted as knowledgeable, friendly, and professional. Many civil servants were classified as good-looking, including Rachel Dawes in *Batman Begins*, foreign spies in *Goldeneye*, and numerous Secret Service agents in *Deep Impact*. We believe that the numbers of those categorized as good-looking and fit is due to the high number of firefighters, Secret Service, and astronauts in the sample - characters routinely portrayed in heroic or similar capacities. The individual civil servants depicted are, to a large degree, shown to be well trained, having expertise in a particular area, and willing and able to work professionally. For example, Will Smith's Agent Jay in *Men in Black* proved to be smart and knowledgeable in tracking down aliens living among us and stopping those aliens intent on destroying the planet. By contrast, Harrison Ford's Jack Ryan, in *Clear and Present Danger*, has to try and save U.S. personnel engaged in questionable operations in Columbia orchestrated by a corrupt and devious National Security Advisor. Despite this example, however, corruption is not a common depiction in the case of American civil servants, although foreign civil servants are sometimes shown to be corrupt (e.g. *Schindler's List*). Judges are depicted as stern or strict more often than those in other occupations and teachers are often depicted as caring or kind (although there are some examples of teachers as uncaring). In *Finding Nemo*, Nemo's teacher, Mr. Ray, is portrayed as friendly and caring. Doctors are often psychiatrists working for the state depicted as not as caring of their patients.

The breakdown of pre- versus post-9/11 films shows little difference the attributes of civil servant characters. In the pre-9/11 period, 52 percent of the depictions of civil servants were positively depicted and 35 percent were negatively depicted. The percentages in the post-9/11 period were 52 percent positive, 32 percent negative, and 16 percent neutral or not coded (see Table 6).

**Table 6**  
**Pre- and Post-9/11 Attributes of Civil Servant Characters**

	Positive Attributes	Negative Attributes	Neutral or not coded
Pre-9/11	52%	35%	13%
Post-9/11	52%	32%	16%

Therefore, we observed little difference in depictions of civil servants post 9/11 as may have been expected with the increased sense of patriotism in the wake of the attacks. However, given production timelines and the limited number of films post 9/11, the sample of films may be too small to draw any definitive conclusions.

## Discussion and Implications

Data from this sample of films fills a void in the literature and highlights some interesting findings. Overall, the general depictions of government are negative, in keeping with our hypotheses and the existing research on the portrayal of government in various narrative forms. Despite the increased sense of patriotism post-9/11, we found the pattern of depiction largely unchanged from the pre-

9/11 context.<sup>11</sup> As with other narrative forms, movie-going Americans could expect to see government portrayed as incompetent, inefficient, and bad when they go to the movies. As a result, we echo Holzer and Slater's (1995) concerns that films "...reinforcing an image of 'government as incompetent'... [may] help to undermine support for the public sector" (86). The casual depictions of government that citizens are exposed to in a variety of circumstances can affect citizens' perceptions of government, if we are to believe the literature on media effects. Thus, in our sample of contemporary movies, we are able to add another category to the list of narrative forms that portray government in a negative light. This conclusion is even more disturbing because of the wide range of Americans that watch movies, particularly the younger generations whose perceptions are more malleable. In addition, because the most popular movies primarily serve entertainment value, the audience may not be consciously aware of these depictions of government.

While the depictions of government in film were not surprising, we did not expect to find that civil servants were generally depicted as competent – and across such a wide array of types of civil servants. About half of the more than 300 civil servants coded in the films were positively depicted. Even more illuminating are the attributes of these characters, who were most often described as good-looking and knowledgeable. These attributes and depictions were found in a wide variety of films as opposed to a specific type of film, thereby increasing support for our finding. It is intriguing to discover that while government is generally portrayed poorly in recent films, the civil servants in those films are depicted more positively. In addition, there is little difference in the depiction of civil servants in the pre- and post-9/11 periods. Characteristics and demographics of civil servants remain fairly constant, for example. One difference is in the increase in the number of teachers and foreign ministry personnel in the post-9/11 period. We did not find an increase in spies or CIA officials. Civil servants were presented positively in both the pre- and post-9/11 period, while a negative depiction of government is evident in both periods as well.<sup>12</sup>

Several explanations may account for these findings. Perhaps the negative depictions of government stem from the actions of military officials and politicians rather than the civil servants themselves. As a result, civil servants in these films are forced to contend with a corrupt government that they are not – or not entirely – responsible for. Since politicians and military officials were excluded in our sample, we cannot say for certain if this explains our findings. Additional research on the depiction of politicians and military officials may shed light on this question. Another explanation may be that film and culture more generally take the lead from elite opinion and references to government or to general public opinion. Many political leaders, especially since President Ronald Reagan, have presented government as "the problem," and this may be reflected in the most popular films of the time. It would be interesting to see if this

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<sup>11</sup> However, the conclusions regarding post-9/11 films should not be overstated for two key reasons. First, there were only five years of films (N=50) that fell into this category for analysis; and second, the pre-production timetable in Hollywood can be lengthy, so the effects of 9/11 may not impact Hollywood for years.

<sup>12</sup> Further study of how other characters are portrayed in films is needed to provide comparison data for civil servants and their attributes in these films. To better understand if the depictions of civil servants are particularly positive, we need to be able to compare their depiction to that of other categories of individuals.

changes under President Barack Obama and a more pragmatic presentation of government's abilities to solve problems – particularly after the perceived lack of governmental oversight's contribution to the financial collapse of 2008-2009.

Given these mixed findings, we may have found additional empirical support for a phenomenon Goodsell (2004) notes. Goodsell found that while the dominant view of government that Americans hold is very negative, their day-to-day interactions with government are typically quite positive. We found that while government is generally depicted negatively in movies, closer inspection of the characters reveals more positive attributes. Therefore, like the average American who on the surface thinks government is bad and actually finds his/her interactions with government to be positive, film may generally portray government poorly, but the individual government characters are more positively depicted.

Research regarding how various narrative forms portray government and more specifically civil servants is generally lacking. Yet with the significant role that entertainment, particularly movies, plays in the lives of many Americans, we should be interested in this area of study. It has been duly noted that our perceptions of government are affected by a range of narrative forms, and in our sample of contemporary American films we find that government is generally portrayed negatively. While most civil servants are portrayed positively, many are portrayed negatively and the government as a whole is presented in a negative light as well. Thus, we must raise concerns similar to those of Holzer and Slater (1995) who assert that negative depictions can lead to negative perceptions of government and civil servants. Perhaps Hollywood will strive for a more accurate portrayal of government and civil servants in the future; however, that seems unlikely as we often look to movies for an idealized version of reality – an escape. Thus, close-ups may be even more contrived than Norma Desmond's elaborate descent down the palace staircase.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For those readers who have not seen Billy Wilder's classic Hollywood-on-Hollywood film, aging silent screen star Norma Desmond believes (in the final scene of the film when she utters her famous line) that she is shooting her next film with Cecil B. DeMille, rather than being arrested on homicide charges.

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## Appendix 1 – Coding Instrument

### ***Coding Sheet: Film Analysis***

Coder \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Film Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Genre (leave blank): \_\_\_\_\_

Setting Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Civil Servant Character # \_\_\_\_\_:

Character Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Character Name (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

American?:    Yes                      No                      Don't Know

If No, country or place if identifiable): \_\_\_\_\_

Level of Government:   Local                      State                      National

Other \_\_\_\_\_                      Unsure

Department/Ministry/Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex:    Female                      Male

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Notable Physical Attributes: \_\_\_\_\_



Adjectives used to describe Character: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Actions/Practices of Character: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Antagonist Name and Description \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality \_\_\_\_\_

Protagonist Name and Description \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Nationality \_\_\_\_\_

How is the government depicted?

Efficient/competent/good: (circle and explain) \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Inefficient/incompetent/bad: (circle and explain)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

N/A

## Description of Coding Sheet

Film Title: *refers to the full name of the film*

Year: *refers to the year that the film was one of the top box office earners*

Genre: leave blank. *Profs. Pautz or Roselle will insert.*

Setting Description: *refers to the time and place of the action. For example, a mythical boarding school called Hogwarts in the late 20th- early 21st century.*

Civil Servant Character # \_\_\_\_: *Number each civil servant character sequentially as you view them in the film.*

*Civil Servants include the following: government officials that are not elected and are not military or law enforcement officers. This includes characters identified as bureaucrats, ministry officials, 'government officials', etc.*

Character Description: *Describe the character's appearance, personality, characteristics.*

Name (if known): *Include all names associated with this character – even nicknames. If the character is referred to by more than one name or nickname please indicate who calls the character which name/nickname.*

American?:    Yes                      No                      Don't Know

If No, country or place if identifiable): \_\_\_\_\_

*Circle yes if the character is clearly an American. No, if not, and don't know if unsure or unclear. Identify the character's country or place if you can – even if the entity is fictional (ie made up)*

Level of Government:    Local                      State                      National

Other \_\_\_\_\_                      Unsure

Department/Ministry/Service: \_\_\_\_\_

*Identify the level of government with which the character is associated and the specific department/ministry/service. Do this as best you can. Note the department or ministry even if the film is set in a fictional place – such as the Ministry of Magic – if you can.*

Demographics:

*Race: Indicate the ethnic background of the character, such as African American, Asian, Hispanic, or Caucasian.*

Sex:    Male                  Female

*Age: Approximate the age of the character, such as mid 30's, or note any specific reference to the character's age.*

*Other Physical Attributes: Note any particular physical attributes of the character, such as a nerdy individual with outdated clothing or a specific disability.*

Adjectives used to describe \_\_\_\_\_

*Note the adjectives used by others to describe this character AND who said each in parentheses after the adjective.*

*For example:*

*The character was described as incompetent by the criminal.*

*The character was described as efficient by the mother.*

Actions/Practices of the Character \_\_\_\_\_

*Note the actions or practices of the character. What does this character do in the movie?*

*For example:*

*This character implements a decision made by the Prime Minister that restricts access to information.*

Antagonist Name and Description \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality \_\_\_\_\_

*The antagonist is the principal opponent of the main character (or hero). Please describe this character and how s/he is depicted. In particular, note if there is anything you would consider to be stereotypical about how the antagonist is presented.*

Protagonist Name and Description \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality \_\_\_\_\_

*The protagonist is the the main character (or hero). Please describe this character and how s/he is depicted. In particular, note if there is anything you would consider to be stereotypical about how the antagonist is presented.*

How is the government depicted?

Efficient/competent/good: (circle and explain)

*Circle this if the government (in general) is portrayed as efficient or able to handle problems or issues. Explain in a few sentences the evidence for your coding on this.*

Inefficient/incompetent/bad: (circle and explain)

*Circle this if the government (in general) is portrayed as inefficient or unable to handle problems or issues. Governmental corruption and incompetence would fall here. Explain in a few sentences the evidence for your coding on this.*

N/A

*Circle this if you are not sure or this does not apply to the film you are coding.*

## Appendix 2 – List of Films

Top Grossing Films of Each Year		Box Office (U.S.) (in millions)
Year	Film	
2006	Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest	\$423
	Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe	\$291
	Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	\$289
	Cars	\$244
	X-Men: The Last Stand	\$234
	King Kong	\$218
	The DaVinci Code	\$217
	Superman Returns	\$200
	Ice Age 2: The Meltown	\$195
	Happy Feet	\$178
	Star Wars: Episode III The Revenge of the Sith	\$380
2005	Meet the Fockers	\$279
	The Incredibles	\$261
	War of the Worlds	\$234
	The Wedding Crashers	\$209
	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	\$206
	Batman Begins	\$205
	Madagascar	\$193
	Mr. and Mrs. Smith	\$186
	Hitch	\$177
	Shrek 2	\$436
	Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King	\$377
2004	Spider-Man 2	\$373
	The Passion of the Christ	\$370
	Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl	\$305
	Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	\$249
	The Day After Tomorrow	\$186
	The Bourne Supremacy	\$176
	Elf	\$173
	I, Robot	\$144
	Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	\$340
	Finding Nemo	\$339
	Star Wars: Episode II - The Attack of the Clones	\$310
2003	The Matrix Reloaded	\$281
	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	\$261
	Bruce Almighty	\$242
	My Big Fat Greek Wedding	\$241
	Signs	\$227
	X2: X-Men United	\$214
	Chicago	\$170

2002	Spider-Man	\$403
	Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	\$317
	Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring	\$313
	Monsters, Inc.	\$255
	Austin Powers in Goldmember	\$213
	Men in Black II	\$190
	Ocean's Eleven	\$183
	Planet of the Apes	\$180
	Ice Age	\$176
	A Beautiful Mind	\$170
2001	Shrek	\$267
	Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas	\$260
	Cast Away	\$233
	Rush Hour 2	\$226
	The Mummy Returns	\$202
	Pearl Harbor	\$198
	Gladiator	\$187
	What Women Want	\$185
	Jurassic Park 3	\$181
	Meet the Parents	\$166
2000	Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace	\$431
	The Sixth Sense	\$293
	Toy Story 2	\$245
	Mission: Impossible 2	\$215
	The Perfect Storm	\$182
	Tarzan	\$171
	X-Men	\$157
	Scary Movie	\$156
	Runaway Bride	\$152
	Stuart Little	\$140
1999	Saving Private Ryan	\$216
	Austin Powers II: The Spy Who Shagged Me	\$205
	There's Something About Mary	\$176
	The Matrix	\$171
	Big Daddy	\$163
	A Bug's Life	\$162
	The Waterboy	\$161
	The Mummy	\$155
	Doctor Dolittle	\$144
	Rush Hour	\$141
1998	Titanic	\$600
	Men in Black	\$250
	Armageddon	\$201
	Air Force One	\$172
	As Good As It Gets	\$147
	Deep Impact	\$140



	Good Will Hunting	\$138
	Godzilla	\$136
	Lethal Weapon 4	\$129
	My Best Friend's Wedding	\$126
1997	Star Wars: Episode VI - The Return of the Jedi	\$252
	The Lost World: Jurassic Park	\$229
	Liar Liar	\$181
	Jerry Maguire	\$153
	Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope	\$138
	Ransom	\$136
	101 Dalmations	\$136
	Face/Off	\$112
	Batman & Robin	\$107
	The First Wives Club	\$105
1996	Independence Day	\$306
	Twister	\$241
	Toy Story	\$191
	Mission: Impossible	\$180
	The Rock	\$133
	The Nutty Professor	\$128
	The Birdcage	\$123
	A Time to Kill	\$108
	Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls	\$108
	Goldeneye	\$105
1995	Forrest Gump	\$329
	The Lion King	\$312
	Batman Forever	\$183
	Apollo 13	\$171
	True Lies	\$146
	The Santa Clause	\$144
	Pocahontas	\$141
	Dumb & Dumber	\$127
	Clear and Present Danger	\$122
	The Mask	\$119
1994	Jurassic Park	\$356
	Mrs. Doubtfire	\$219
	The Fugitive	\$183
	The Flintstones	\$130
	Sleepless in Seattle	\$126
	Speed	\$121
	Maverick	\$101
	The Pelican Brief	\$100
	Parenthood	\$100
	Schindler's List	\$95
1993	Aladdin	\$217
	Home Alone 2	\$172

	Indecent Proposal	\$165
	The Firm	\$158
	A Few Good Men	\$141
	Sister Act	\$139
	The Bodyguard	\$121
	In the Line of Fire	\$102
	Unforgiven	\$101
	Cliffhanger	\$84
1992	Terminator 2: Judgement Day	\$204
	Batman Returns	\$162
	Beauty and the Beast	\$144
	Lethal Weapon 3	\$144
	Wayne's World	\$121
	Hook	\$118
	Basic Instinct	\$117
	The Addams Family	\$113
	A League of their Own	\$107
	Father of the Bride	\$89

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# Teaching Special Topics in Public Administration Using Select Episodes of NBC's *West Wing* to Support and Supplement Class Lecture and Textbook Readings

Michael W. Popejoy

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There is really nothing new about using various popular media resources, such as film documentaries, movies, television, novels, art, music and other forms of expression, to illustrate and inform aspects of public administration topics from either a current or historical perspective. However, the media used should be carefully selected for its accuracy, relevance, and impact—even if it is fiction. Further, once in a while, along comes a truly well produced media work that exceeds the criteria of accuracy, relevance, and impact; as for the subject of accuracy, close can be close enough as long as the classroom instructor focuses students' attention on the backstory and corrects inaccuracies derived from any "dramatic license" taken in the story. Thus, using select episodes from NBC's award winning drama series *The West Wing* is not a "plug and play" proposition. Significant involvement by classroom instructors and active participation in discussions by students, as opposed to just watching the episode, are necessary to achieve the maximum level of efficacy.

Aaron Sorkin, the show's creator and principal writer for many of the earlier seasons, makes it clear in his commentary on the DVD set that *The West Wing* is fiction, regardless of how much storylines of some episodes resemble real events. It would be a mistake for anyone to view episodes as historical documentary; yet there are nuances and elements of truth that can be gleaned from the dramas as they are played out. Sorkin does not want critics to attack the show whenever it deviates from real facts. Sorkin wants us to know the series is pure entertainment with a political flavor that provides some idea of how things work in Washington politics. However, it is a waste of time to try to find a one-to-one correspondence for every dramatic piece in the show with a real world event. If you are looking for history, try the *History Channel*.

In my view, there is no doubt that education and entertainment can coincide comfortably, but often not without a guided cross walk provided by the classroom instructor, who is present to lecture before the episode is viewed, make occasional comments during the episode at particu-

larly critical points, and finally to guide a discussion after the episode concludes—particularly if the professor is concerned about historical accuracy by correcting where the episode may deviate from the real world event. Only through this stratified approach will the greatest benefit be gained from taking class time to watch any popular media representation of a class topic.

The first and foremost task for the classroom instructor is to prepare the students for viewing the episode. Initially, the students should be informed on what they can expect to see and get out of viewing the episode, and what to avoid in viewing the episode, such as getting caught up in the work of the actors and/or the potential over dramatization of an event known as “dramatic license.” While this dramatic representation of event(s) that can have significant impact on the informed viewer is not necessarily a bad thing, unless the professor is an historical “purist” and cannot be bothered to lecture through fiction to fact, the “drama,” however, needs to remain in perspective; otherwise, the students risk losing the significance of the backstory, which is the main reason for viewing the episode in the first place.

NBC’s *The West Wing* covers seven seasons with 154 episodes, with air dates from September 22, 1999 (pilot) to May 14, 2006 (series finale). During this time period, many turbulent events impacted the United States and the world, and much of this was reflected in one way or the other on the series. The series should never be viewed as a documentary; rather, it is art reflecting reality in subtle ways that both entertain and inform. Indeed, one test of students’ perceptions is to ask them to discern initially for themselves where the facts are convoluted into a fictional representation of real events. This could be a challenging aspect to class discussion.

How much this series impacted the impressions that American citizens and others around the world had of the White House is a matter of debate, and maybe this idea necessitates some significant social research. This was a very popular show; people watched it and became passionately caught up in its characters, including President Jed Bartlett (played by veteran actor Martin Sheen). They also got caught up in the major social and political issues, both domestic and international, that were presented to the fictional West Wing staff who dealt with these issues—many of them quite critical and relevant to the same issues faced by the real West Wing staff.

Relating to how many people watched this show and how the critics viewed it, it is useful to note, at least briefly, that over its run, it won 24 Emmy Awards, including four consecutive awards for Best Drama Series. Further, *The West Wing* won a Golden Globe Award for Best Television Drama Series, two consecutive Peabody Awards for Broadcast and Cable Excellence, two Humanitas Prizes, as well as Television Critics Awards for Best Drama Series. The show also won the Producers Guild Award, Directors Guild Award, Writers Guild Award, Screen Actors Guild Award, and was named “TV Show of the Year” by *Entertainment Weekly*. *The West Wing* was more than a hit when it aired; it became an icon of American television; and in reruns, it may continue to be so for many years.

Among the 154 episodes, that are now available in a boxed set of 45 DVDs *The West Wing: The Complete Series* (Warner Brothers, 2006), there are a huge number of teachable points embed-

ded in virtually every episode. But, since it was never intended to be an instructional tool, to date, there is no known guide to every episode in which distinctive teachable points of politics/public administration are identified and located on each disk. This seems a major project that could be engaged at some time if the field decided to use this resource in sufficient quantity to make it feasible to do the work of cataloging all the possible classroom applications. Further, the DVD set has embedded commentary from the writers, directors, and cast members that add a sense of what they were trying to accomplish in many of the specific scenes in each episode.

Over the past several years, I have been using one particular episode in my graduate courses in both Scope and Theory of Public Administration and Public Finance. It is Episode 96 in Season Five entitled "Shutdown." This episode was written by Mark Goffman and directed by Christopher Misiano, and aired on November 19, 2003. Since the Scope and Theory of Public Administration course has one chapter in the adopted textbook devoted to public finance (Chapter 8 in *Public Administration and Public Affairs*, 10th edition (2007), by Nicholas Henry), this episode was well positioned to dramatize some aspects of the chapter. Next, since the Public Finance course has a number of chapters devoted to the subject of federal budgeting and the relationship between Congress and the Oval Office, this episode fit well into my course syllabi for both courses.

This particular episode dramatizes the tension between Congress and the President over the federal budget leading to a confrontation between series characters President Jed Bartlett and Speaker of the House Haffley—this confrontation leads to a shut down of the federal government ordered by Bartlett in the absence of agreeing to a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the government temporarily, until an agreement could be reached on a final federal operating budget.

In the early minutes of this particular episode, the impact of the federal budget and any cuts in the budget are covered in conversation between series characters Toby Ziegler and C.J. Cregg. The low sounding number of "two to three percent cuts means real program cuts in terms of a billion dollars of program funds;" and President Bartlett refuses to allow the Speaker to renege on a deal they had already made on the cuts. An interesting aspect of the debate is the view of both camps' "war rooms" where they strategize how to defeat the other side.

President Bartlett stands alone on this issue, since even his staff believes they cannot win against Congressional demands for their version of the federal budget. This is due to Bartlett's low approval ratings and no allies on the Hill for his version of the Federal budget. A politically weak President loses the initiative. But, he orders the government shut down until he gets his deal—he is still the President of the United States and he uses his power accordingly. He has the executive authority to do so, even in peacetime, but it is not a popular authority.

Another point this episode illustrates, along with many other episodes of the series, is the extent to which the West Wing staffers, including series character Leo as Chief of Staff, really run the White House in the background in terms of developing policy, often from the President's perspective but sometimes at odds with what the President wants.

In this “Shutdown” episode, Leo is trying to convince the President to accept the position of the Speaker of the House on the Budget and end the shut down. Leo is so frustrated in not being able to move President Bartlett to an agreement that he calls the First Lady to come back to the White House to talk Bartlett down from the abyss. This plot twist can be a view of the role of the First Lady that is not always considered—her personal influence over the President (her husband first) in making a rational decision.

In *The West Wing*, the First Lady (played by Stockard Channing) is portrayed as an intelligent, articulate, well educated (M.D.) woman who has a mind of her own and is often at odds with her husband politically, which offers some dramatic tension. Any instructor teaching a course on the First Lady can find many episodes in which her influence on the President and on some aspects of public policy development is portrayed. Comparisons may be made between Dr. Bartlett and other powerful First Ladies.

It is also clear early in the episode that public pressure is guided by using the media to manipulate opinion toward one position or another, as we watch Haffley exit the White House and immediately meet with the press gaggle on the White House lawn; and it is very dramatic to see how the President can recapture the media as he moves directly to visit Speaker Haffley at his Congressional office—Bartlett captures air time on all three networks as he walks to the Capitol building. This is a clear demonstration that, when the President speaks or is on the move, the press gaggle will be on point—the President will have the moment—he will be on national television, even pre-empting daytime television shows. This is where the tide turns on the debate between Bartlett and Haffley—the press follows the President, reporting on his efforts to end the shutdown, and public opinion is swayed to his position.

Certainly, students can see that both Haffley and Bartlett are using the press to report their political posturing, but for the President it works. This is dramatically portrayed in a scene where the President is left sitting outside the Congressional office door and the series character Josh tells the President that he should leave the hall, right now. So, when the Congressmen finally come out to see him, he and the press gaggle are walking out the door to leave the Capitol building—it is at that point that Haffley knows he has lost the initiative.

In the final scene, Haffley visits Bartlett in the Oval Office, where Bartlett reigns supreme and where Bartlett dictates that Haffley meet the conditions of their previous agreement. Their conversation covers in broad strokes the basic differences in views between Democrats and Republicans and the roles of Congress and the President in the budget process. Bartlett states that he is the President of the United States and that he will leave the government shut down until he gets a budget. He gets his budget. This is power politics, and the President has the power.

How close is this episode to what really happens in the annual operating budget process? In less than 45 minutes of air time (no commercials on the DVD episodes, which helps maintain the students’ focus) a great many issues are presented that are close to reality but with far less detail than



we expect to find in the textbooks and journals on the same subject. However, it gets the point into the minds of students. Then it is up to the classroom instructor to fill in the gaps, add detail, apply real names to the characters of *The West Wing*, and apply real dates to the events that are in our textbooks. It is then that the backstory for *The West Wing* show becomes real for the students.

In the final episodes of the final season, there is a great number of very interesting teaching points on a presidential run, election, and transition to the White House, with particular emphasis on how policy is developed during the transition and the role of the White House staffers in both the outgoing and incoming administrations. How much do these episodes show students the backstory of what was going on in the 2008 campaigns of Presidential Candidates Obama and McCain? Depending on the best knowledge of the classroom instructor, that particular cross walk can be highly variable—if the instructor is not well versed in presidential transition, then at least viewing the episodes can give students some feeling for the process; and, of course, if the instructor is well prepared to lecture on the topic, then the instructor can fill in gaps that the drama cannot. Either way, the students can gain some value from viewing the episodes.

The key emphasis in the episodes on the election of Bartlett's replacement is the urgency, the frenzy, the clashing of ideas and personalities, the large numbers of people who work the back rooms of a campaign. These episodes must leave viewers virtually breathless as the pace of the campaign heats up and the public policy issues span the waterfront of real issues being dealt with now. Ethical challenges and dilemmas present themselves as both candidates must decide whether or not to run negative campaign advertising. This tags viewers (and students) who will identify with at least something in the depiction of a fictional campaign. This is fast paced action, as the candidates and their staffs work the country for votes. Also, this leads to some highly energetic post-viewing classroom discussion among students. In fact, the discussion is much more animated than discussions on textbook readings, unfortunately. With a generation in the classroom who has grown up with television, a well done television show has more "spark value" than the best written textbook; and this television show is one of the best written, best produced, best photographed in the history of television. The soundstage for *The West Wing* alone is one of the largest ever constructed for a television show, and its accuracy in terms of looking and feeling like the real White House is considered uncanny by those who have spent time in both venues.

Yes, of course, this is drama, but it is worth repeating that it is drama at its very best—some of the best television ever seen—and this is coming from the critics who rarely rave about anything. They do rave about this show. An interesting point of potential social research is how much this show has influenced the viewers across the nation. In terms of students, I get overwhelmingly positive affirmations in the post-course evaluations, specifically referencing the viewing and the discussions surrounding this episode. Indeed, there have been no negative comments received in post course evaluations regarding the episode being shown in class in both undergraduate and graduate courses. For some people in this country, this show may be responsible for them knowing something—anything—about how their government works, even though it is not a perfect portrayal.

The students liked the episode shown in my classes, and they enjoyed the class engagement, both prior to and after viewing the episode. From a quality standpoint, it is attractive and entertaining, and it informs in a way the writers want it to inform—the liberal world view seen through an idealistic lens. If the instructor wants to balance the perspective—from the left to the right, from idealistic to more realistic, from liberal to more conservative—it can be done in class discussion where the participants can offer their alternatives. With some pedagogical skill and preparation, the Devil's Advocate can be played out by the instructor and engaged in by the students against the plot line of any of the episodes.

Who was behind this show? Where did the apparent realism come from? First, the producer was John Wells, who produced the series *ER* (another long running, award winning, very realistic television show), and director was Tommy Schlamme, who has a long resume as a director of TV shows, HBO specials, and movies. Second, the genius behind the set of *The West Wing* was set designer John Huttman, who was given access to the real West Wing of the White House, so that the set design would be as realistic as possible. But at the heart of this show, its creator and main writer, is Aaron Sorkin, who had reached acclaim as the writer of *A Few Good Men*, *The American President*, *Malice*, and *Sports Night*. It was Sorkin who commented early on how big a role the political system would have in the new series. He commented, "Obviously, politics is going to play a part in the show, but your enjoyment of the show really isn't going to depend upon whether you agree with that episode politically or whether you agree with a character politically. *Issues* are going to be on the show, but really only as fodder for drama. The show is probably going to be all over the map, populated with characters who argue all sides of an issue" (Challen, 2001, p.2).

Aaron Sorkin, an award winning writer, born in 1961, is no stranger to politics, even from the backrooms where politics is often done dirty and nasty. At age 11, he was a volunteer at the George McGovern headquarters. He has a natural knack for dialogue and a passion for patriotism and liberal politics—all of which infuses his snappy writing and political leanings. Sorkin's rapid fire dialog, along with Schlamme's "walk and talk" directorial technique, and the huge sound stage allowing for a great deal of movement within each scene, provides the ability of the show to be both unusually tense and fast paced.

While Sorkin was researching for his movie script on *The American President*, he toured the West Wing of the White House at night to capture the look and the feel of the place. While writing the script for *The American President* and scripting the series *Sports Night*, he was already planning the pilot for *The West Wing*. How could he accomplish this entire creative work product simultaneously? Unfortunately, his was a flawed genius of a freebase cocaine addict. He told the L.A. Times, "I was actually writing good material. I was the kind of addict who was functional. But, I didn't see or talk to people. I'd fax my pages over and then close the curtains and start writing again." Later Sorkin spent 28 days in rehab to kick his habit, and, arguably, like other greatly creative addicts, Stephen King presumably among them, he lost some of his best creative energy after his recovery. The realistic flavor of the fictional West Wing was also achieved by the smart recruitment of some real life "West Wingers," such as Dee Dee Myers, former Clinton press secretary, and Marlin Fitzwater and Peggy Noonan from the Reagan administration. The team then added Demo-

cratic consultant Patrick Caddell and Lawrence O'Donnell, a political columnist and former aide to New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. This is a deep talent pool to keep the show as real as possible; and yet it remains a television show of fiction and entertainment, doable on a studio sound stage, with all of its limitations in shooting angles and size relative to the real West Wing.

Critics from both the entertainment world and political commentators have watched episodes of the show and are generally split on how truthful the show actually is. It has been said that, at the very least, Aaron Sorkin has been praised for uplifting the world view and that *The West Wing* (as described by Chris Lehman of the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine) “sets out week after week to restore public faith in the institutions of our government, to shore up the bulwarks of American patriotism, and to supply a vision of executive liberalism—at once principled and pragmatic; mandating both estimable political vision and serious personal sacrifice; plying an understanding of the nation’s common good that is heroically heedless of focus groups, opposition research, small bore compromise, and re-election politics...” Later he adds, “in the thickets of controversy that crop up in the Bartlett Administration, the strongest objection to a policy or a decision to overstep protocol is usually that it doesn’t feel right—and that approach just does not, in the real life, ring true” (2001, p. 93). But, again, Sorkin never intended it to be real life or necessarily ring true.

However, even Sorkin repeatedly responds emphatically, “These connections are nonsense. I’m a fiction writer. I make those people up” (Challen, 2001, p. 34). But, for most, any realistic pretensions the show might have are simply part of doing a good TV drama; and if that touches on truth, then why can’t we not use it in the classroom, even as an example of how things could be in an idealized world?

Finally, I would propose that *The West Wing* episodes could be shown without undue harm to both our young and mature students but only with responsible adult supervision in the room (the faculty). Certainly, like with most things, we should consider its merits but reserve our judgment as to its truthfulness until we hear all the facts—again, responsible instructors in the room to fill in the details and wipe the star dust from the eyes of our students.

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# Tenets of Public Management and the World War II Motion Picture Genre

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## Introduction

Artistic portrayals can have profound societal impacts. Literature, novels, and poetry can expand our knowledge of public management, as these artistic mediums create real world situations that allow us to learn vicariously. The arts offer alternative perspectives on issues related to public sector management and governance in general. Perhaps more importantly, the arts provide fresh insights regarding values, ethics, leadership qualities, and interpersonal skills (Holzer, Morris, and Ludwin 1979; Waldo 1968). The motion picture is a dynamic artistic medium, as it amplifies emotions through the combination of imagery and sound. This medium has proven ideal for chronicling the American World War II experience. The World War II film genre has portrayed the American combat soldier as heroic and resourceful (Suid 2002). These portrayals of actions and leadership on the battlefield are, to some measure, applicable to contemporary public management. The purpose of this paper is to examine select World War II motion pictures in the context of the following questions: (1) what tenets do these motion pictures convey, and (2) to what extent do these tenets apply to public management? The motion pictures *Patton* (1970), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), and *The Great Escape* (1963) are examined.

## The World War II Motion Picture Genre

The typical World War II film portrayed ordinary men accomplishing extraordinary tasks. These pictures displayed courage, camaraderie, and strength of character. The films of the 1940s portrayed the American combat soldier as strong, resourceful, and even humane in the face of war, characteristics that Humphrey Bogart displays in the film *Sahara* (1943) (Suid 2002). The films of the 1940s emphasized patriotism, disdain for authoritarianism, and the virtue of freedom and democracy. Love of country and sacrifice were championed in films such as *Wake Island* (1942). According to Bodnar (2004), *Wake Island* “evoked memories of American heroism at Valley Forge and the Alamo,” as the plot entails a brave struggle of U.S. Marines to hold Wake Island against a Japanese force of superior numbers (Manvell 1974).

According to McCormick (1999), the films of the 1950s and early 1960s, such as *To Hell and Back* (1955), *The Longest Day* (1962), and *The Great Escape* (1963), were conveyed as “heroic epics.” This was largely due to the popularity of World War II and its generation. *To Hell and Back* is an autobiographical account of Audie Murphy’s war experience. Having served in campaigns throughout the North Africa and Europe, Murphy emerged as the most decorated American soldier of the Second World War. He earned thirty-seven medals, including unit accommodations, campaign medals, and the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest award for valor in combat. *The New York Times* heralded the film and Murphy’s performance, having written:

Gallantry has been glorified more dramatically on film previously but Mr. Murphy, who still seems to be the shy, serious tenderfoot rather than a titan among G.I. heroes, lends stature, credibility and dignity to an autobiography that would be routine and hackneyed without him (New York Times 1955, 21).

*The Longest Day* chronicles the sheer magnitude and audacity of the Allied invasion of Normandy. D-Day has since been focus of several films, including *The Big Red One* (1980) and the critically acclaimed *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). As its title suggests, *The Great Escape* dramatically portrays the valor and spirit of Allied POWs in their successful departure from a German prison camp (Suid 2002; Doherty 1993; Basinger 1986; Manvell 1974). In the *Guns of Navarone* (1961), courage is exemplified in a daring attempt to destroy German guns guarding the strategically vital Mediterranean island of Navarone. While the *Battle of the Bulge* (1965) offers spectacular combat scenes, this film was criticized given its failure to capture the human side of battle. *Where Eagles Dare* (1969) is filled with drama, as Richard Burton and Clint Eastwood’s characters scale a mountaintop to rescue an Allied General who is being held prisoner in a German castle. *The Bridge at Remagen* (1969) depicts the Allies’ attempt to secure the only remaining bridge across the Rhine River in Germany. Failure to secure the Remagen Bridge would slow the Allied advance into Germany (Suid 2002). There are undoubtedly common threads throughout the majority of these films. These men are heroic, selfless, and combat is glorified. The American soldier is glorified in that fighting bravely is noble – regardless of the costs. Imbedded throughout these seemingly patriotic depictions are life lessons as well, some of which are arguably applicable to contemporary public management.

## **Patton (1970)**

*Patton* is a biographical epic that underscores the tribulations and triumphs of an individual consumed by war. According to Canby (1970a), *Patton* allows one to delve into the psyche of perhaps the most brilliant and outrageous military tactician of the 20th century. Patton is described as a “magnificent anachronism,” referring to Patton’s own belief that he was a 16th century man trapped in the 20th century. He is portrayed as a romantic warrior. Patton wrote poetry and prayed on his knees, while at the same time championing the virtues of warlike behavior, usually using profanity to underscore his points. While a brilliant tactician and leader, Patton is portrayed as an inherently flawed man. The audience witnesses this first hand when the General slaps a shell-shocked soldier



for what he thought was cowardly behavior – that is, shying away from battle. Canby (1970a, 33) contends, “Patton’s genius as a tactician excused his vanities, his ignorances, and his seeming mental instability.” Canby (1970b, 15) maintains that *Patton* is the “epic American war movie that the Hollywood establishment has always wanted to make but never had the guts to do so.”

Students of *Patton* have come to understand that man’s love of war and this aspect of the human personality are conveyed throughout the film. Specifically, standing on a battlefield in France, Patton said the following regarding war: “I love it. God help me, I love it so. I love it more than my life.” Schjeldahl (1970) is critical of the film insofar as it portrays an “American hero” as someone who is unlike the classic America. According to Schjeldahl (1970, 107):

[Patton] is portrayed as surrounded by universally decent, peace-preferring men, notably Karl Malden’s saccharine, nice-guy Omar Bradley men for whom ‘loving it’ is an utterly alien idea...Americans are a war-like people. What was peculiarly refreshing and especially terrifying about Patton was that he saw no need to deny that fact. What is hateful about ‘Patton’ is that its makers saw fit, for the sake of turning out a slick, seamless epic, to treat his candor in such a way as to make it seem a lie.

Regardless, *Patton* received popular and critical acclaim, having won eight Academy awards, including Best Picture. According to Henry Hart, chairman of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, *Patton*’s success can be attributed to the fact that it “is one of the very few biofilms which have depicted, with exceptional cinematic skill, the bad as well as the good about a contemporary personality” (Weiler 1970, 40).

The opening scene of *Patton* is brilliant in its simplicity and inspiring given its message. Standing before an American flag that fills the backdrop in full dress uniform with numerous rows of medals and ribbons prominently displayed, General Patton (portrayed by George C. Scott) speaks passionately and poetically to the members of the Third Army on the eve of Operation Overlord (the Allied invasion of Normandy). Patton’s delivery and words are unforgettable, as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

Now, I want you to remember that no bastard ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making the other poor dumb bastard die for his country. Men, all this stuff you’ve heard about America not wanting to fight, wanting to stay out of the war, is a lot of horse dung. Americans traditionally love to fight. All real Americans love the sting of battle. When you were kids, you all admired the champion marble shooter, the fastest runner, the big league ball player, the toughest boxer. Americans love a winner and will not tolerate a loser. Americans play to win all the time. I wouldn’t give a hoot in hell for a man who lost and laughed. That’s why Americans have never lost and will never lose a war. Because the very thought of losing is hateful to Americans.

The aforementioned excerpt reflects Patton’s desire to instill a sense of duty among the members

of the Third Army. The General appealed to their sense of pride, suggesting that it is un-American to be cowardly or to shy away from a battle. The opening scene of Patton is, without question, one of the most recognizable scenes of any motion picture. Its impact and message are lasting, as it conveys the importance of courage under fire and honoring one's commitment to the fullest. These tenets remain part of the American ethic, and they were so intensely conveyed by George C. Scott. According to Canby (1970b, 85), Patton's speech "is one of astonishing arrogance, a jingoistic tour de force, full of enthusiasm for the butchery to come and reeking with the assumption that there is a God who is, of course, on the side of the Allies."

### ***Patton in North Africa***

Subsequent to Patton's speech, the audience sees a Tunisian battlefield (Kasserine Pass in 1943) littered with American soldiers and scorched tanks. At this battlefield, General Omar Bradley and his officers ponder the reasons underpinning such a devastating loss at the hands of the German Afrika Corps. They argued that the American Second Corps was undisciplined and ill prepared, and one of General Bradley's subordinates suggests using Patton to solve this problem. Ever flamboyant, Patton arrives at the Headquarters of the Second Corps in his halftrack with its siren screaming. Patton wants everyone to take notice. He announces his presence with authority so as to convey that changes will be made, and that the Second Corps is fully under his command. Discipline is emphasized, as Patton tells General Bradley that lack of discipline is at the heart of the matter. "You want to know why this outfit got the hell kicked out of it? A blind man could see it in a minute. They don't look like soldiers. They don't act like soldiers. Why should they be expected fight like soldiers?" As a consequence, the culture of the Second Corps experiences a revolutionary change of style. Discipline is instilled at all costs. This is exemplified when Patton fines a cook \$20 for not wearing his leggings (part of a soldier's regulation military dress). Subsequent to fining the cook, Patton makes a general announcement that any soldier not properly dressed will be "skinned." While the General's threat may seem hyperbolic, this does not diminish the weight of his message: discipline and order are prerequisites for success. Patton quickly straightens out the units of the Second Corps, eventually leading them to victory against Field Marshall Erwin Rommel and his Tenth Panzer Division at El Guettar in North Africa.

### ***Relief of Bastogne***

The picture further highlights the virtues of meticulous preparation and strategic planning by an incident at Bastogne. In December 1944, Patton's Third Army was moving steadily across France toward the German border. In the film, General Bradley notifies Patton of German activity in the Ardennes region – a heavily wooded region that is primarily situated in Belgium and Luxembourg. At the time, Patton felt that there was no reason to believe that the Germans would mount a major offensive given the difficulty of negotiating the heavily wooded terrain. Also, the weather was frigid, the snow was heavy, and German supplies were running low. Ironically, it is precisely for these reasons that Patton believed a German offensive was imminent in the Ardennes region. The enemy activity that General Bradley spoke of was the beginning of the Ardennes Offensive, more commonly referred to by Americans as the Battle of the Bulge.

The film shows the virtue of foresight and strategic planning. In one particular scene, Patton orders his staff to make preparations for pulling the Third Army out of its eastward attack and changing directions to the north toward Luxembourg, which would enable Patton's forces to strike the underbelly of the German Ardennes offensive. Patton tells his staff to make contingency plans for three possible routes of attack north from their current position in Arlon, France: to Diekirch, Neufchateau, and Bastogne. Subsequently, Patton meets with several Allied commanders in Verdun, France; this scene shows the virtue of strategic planning and preparation, which is highlighted in the following exchange among American and British commanders:

English Commander One: *Our immediate concern is that von Rundstedt has the 101st Airborne trapped here at Bastogne..*

General Smith: *Bastogne, by the way, is the key to this entire area. If we can hold it, we can break up the entire German offensive. If they take it, we're in serious trouble. Ike wants to know if anyone can get up there and relieve the 101st before they are torn to pieces.*

English Commander Two: *I'm afraid there's nothing that Field Marshall Montgomery can do...anyway, not for some weeks.*

General Smith: *What about you, George [Patton]?*

General Patton: *I can attack with three divisions in 48 hours.*

General Bradley: *Well, I'd give myself some leeway if I were you.*

General Smith: *Ike wants a realistic estimate, George. You're in a fight now, and its over 100 miles to Bastogne.*

General Patton: *My staff is already working on the details.*

Because of Patton's strategic planning and meticulous coordination – that is, foreseeing the German offensive and preparing contingency plans for three potential points of attack, which included the besieged city of Bastogne – the Third Army was able to relieve the 101st Airborne at Bastogne and the German offensive failed. This ultimately marked the beginning of the end of the European theatre of war.

### **Saving Private Ryan (1998)**

*Saving Private Ryan* gives its audience a frightening and realistic look at the Omaha Beach landing during D-Day. As the gunfire explosions rage throughout the film's opening sequence, the audience is furnished with a portrayal of combat that is less than glorious. Spielberg shows the brutality of war through vivid yet terrifying imagery and cinematography. For example, an American GI is shown staggering in disarray searching for the lower half of his arm, which was severed by a piece of shrapnel. From the perspective of the German machine gun posts, the viewer is shown a beachhead that is littered with fallen soldiers. As the waves crash into the shore, they are red with the blood of those who made the ultimate sacrifice in helping to achieve a most noble and extraordinary accomplishment.

While *Saving Private Ryan* conveys the brutality of combat, it does so without implying that American combat soldiers are inherently brutal or savage. They are portrayed as courageous in-

dividuals that do not relish the glory of combat, wanting simply to defeat totalitarianism and return home to lives they left behind. According to Bodner (2004),

While the Spielberg film reveals the brutality of war, it preserves the World War II image of the American soldiers as inherently adverse to bloodshed and cruelty...At its rhetorical core, the story's argument would have seemed very familiar to audiences in the 1940s: the common American soldier was fundamentally a good man who loved his country and his family. He went to war out of a sense of duty to both...

Harper (2001) contends that this film "enhances our current nostalgia for the 'Good War.' Gratitude to the 'greatest generation' moved many people to see Private Ryan." Perhaps most importantly, Private Ryan served to remind us what can be accomplished when "its citizens unite in a cause with a weight of moral rightness behind it" (Carr 1998, C9).

### ***The Search for Private James Ryan***

While unforgettable, the Omaha Beach landing is only a minor segment of the film. The film's main plot centers on a fictitious mission handed down by General George C. Marshall. Although the search for Private James Ryan did not occur, the events surrounding this tale provide a sense of realism as to the day-to-day lives of the American infantryman. Captain John Miller (portrayed by Tom Hanks) and his men are ordered to rescue Private James Ryan given that Ryan's three brothers were killed in combat. In their search for Ryan, Captain Miller and his men encounter a German machine gun bunker hidden in the French countryside. The men desire to go around the bunker and avoid danger altogether. Captain Miller, however, displays rational leadership in choosing the more difficult of two paths, which is shown in the following exchange between Captain Miller and his men.

Captain Miller: *Well, it looks like we've got something. A sand bag bunker right underneath the station.*

Sergeant Horvath: *Yeah.*

Corporal Upham: *What is it?*

Sergeant Horvath: *Machine gun...probably an MP 42.*

Private Reiben: *I don't know how fast the rest of you betties are, but I'm thinking if we detour this way quick and quiet, the Krauts'll never know we were even here. So, Captain, what I'm trying to say is why don't we just go around the thing?*

Captain Miller: *I hear what you're saying. But, we can't go around it.*

Private Jackson: *I'm with Reiben on this one, Sir.*

Private Mellish: *Captain, we can skip it and accomplish our mission. I mean this isn't our mission. Right, Sir?*

Captain Miller: *Is that what you want to do, Mellish? You just want to leave it [the machine gun nest] here so they can ambush the next Company that comes along?*

Private Mellish: *No, Sir; that's not what I'm saying. I'm simply saying it seems like an unnecessary risk given our objective, Sir.*

Captain Miller: *Our objective it to win the war.*

Private Reiben: *Sir, I don't have good feeling about this one.*

Captain Miller: *When was the last time you had a good feeling about anything?*

From a management standpoint, the lesson here is that shortcuts have consequences. Doing what is easy or expedient will likely engender undesired long-term results. Even though one of Captain Miller's men was killed, the decision to attack the German machine gun bunker, more than likely, saved lives. Managers must be able to cope with difficult decisions, and they must be able to make these decisions in the context of a utilitarian ideal. That is to suggest that all managers, regardless of the type of organization they are charged with guiding, must operate under the assumption that the aggregate good is paramount.

### **The Great Escape (1963)**

*The Great Escape* is heroic classic that chronicles Allied POWs and their successful escape from a German prison camp. Steve McQueen's character (Captain Hilt) is portrayed as the quintessential American officer. Captain Hilt is brash, confident, and sardonic when in the presence of authority. These qualities, however, differentiate Hilt from the other Allies, thereby designating him the de facto leader of the prisoners. Hilt's qualities are best portrayed in his exchange with the Kommandant of the prison camp.

Kommandant: *What were you doing by the wire?*

Captain Hilt: *Well, like I told Max...(Hilt pauses) I was trying to cut my way through the wire because I want to get out (Hilt takes out a pair of wire cutters concealed beneath his cloths and hands them to the Kommandant).*

Kommandant: *You are the first American officer I have met. Hilt, isn't it?*

Captain Hilt: *Captain Hilt, actually.*

Kommandant: *Seventeen escape attempts.*

Captain Hilt: *Eighteen.*

Kommandant: *Tunnel man, engineer?*

Captain Hilt: *Flyer.*

Kommandant: *As opposed to what's called in the American Army...a hotshot pilot. Unfortunately, you were shot down anyway. So, we are both grounded for the duration of the war.*

Captain Hilt: *Well, you speak for yourself, Colonel.*

Kommandant: *You have other plans?*

Captain Hilt: *I haven't seen Berlin yet...from the ground or the air, and I plan on doing both before the war is over.*

Kommandant: *Are all American officers so ill mannered?*

Captain Hilt: *Yeah, about 99 percent.*



Kommandant: *Then perhaps with us you'll have a chance to learn some. TEN DAYS ISOLATION, Hilts.*

Captain Hilts: (Pulling his collar forward showing his rank) *Captain Hilts.*

Kommandant: *Twenty days.*

Captain Hilts: *Right...you'll still be here when I get out?* (Sarcasm emphasized)

Even though they are imprisoned, the Allies work toward aiding the war effort – as well as themselves. Specifically, if the men were to engineer a large-scale escape (approximately 250 prisoners), then the Germans would be forced to pull men from the battlefield in order to capture the escapees and refortify the POW camp. This is precisely what the Allies attempt to accomplish. They are systematic and calculated in their approach. The Allies' approach could be described as Weberian in that each man is responsible for a specialized task tailored to his military training. Some of the specialized tasks include tunnel digging, intelligence gathering, planning and carrying out diversions, acquiring maps and surveys of the campgrounds, and even sewing clothing so that the escapees will be able to blend in with the masses.

*The Great Escape* is more than a film depicting the intricate plans of a wartime prison break. The film underscores the importance of values – namely, unity, cooperation, camaraderie, and, above all, sacrifice. Specifically, Captain Hilts volunteers to escape and then allows himself to be caught. While this seems counterintuitive, Hilts does this so that the Allies will have all of the necessary intelligence should they manage to make it past the prison fences. For instance, the Allies need to know where the closest town and railway station are, in addition to where specific roads lead to and if there are German units stationed nearby the camp. Captain Hilts provides his comrades with this information and gives up his freedom in the process.

## Conclusion

Throughout *Patton* (1970), discipline is a central tenet. General Patton instills discipline at all costs among the members of the Second Corps after their failed campaigns throughout North Africa. No exceptions are made. The General imposes what appears to be a draconian style when it comes to enforcing even the most minor rules and regulations, embracing a classic Theory X management style in what could be considered a time of crisis (McGregor 1957). General Patton further relies on strategic planning to help thwart the final German offensive. In *Saving Private Ryan*, Captain Miller underscores the importance of not straying from the group's fundamental goals in order to achieve a short-term objective. As the younger, rank and file soldiers rationalize avoiding a machine gun bunker because doing so would not prevent them from accomplishing their short-term objective (i.e., finding Private Ryan), Captain Miller cautions against being short-sighted. Interjected here is rationale decision-making as well. Miller argues that bypassing the machine gun nest will likely cost more lives in the long-term, thus counterproductively impacting the war effort in general. The Allied POWs in *The Great Escape* rely on the coordination of their individual talents and specialized training to hatch an intricate escape plan, the sole purpose of which is to divert manpower and resources from the battlefronts, thus aiding the Allied



war effort. Finally, a central tenet through each of these films is what Henri Fayol might refer to as esprit de corps. Instilled throughout the three films was the idea of duty and honor to the group and the task at hand. This notion of duty – or striving to accomplish something that is more important than oneself – is arguably a central component to all successful organizations, most notably Japanese management models as highlighted by Deming (1982) and Ouchi (1981).

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# The Positive Image of Public Servants in Editorial Cartoons (1999 - 2003)

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## Introduction

The editorial cartoon has long been a part of American culture, capturing critical moments throughout history. Caricatures allow for editorial commentary on American issues ranging from joining the Union to presidential assassinations. A particular target of the editorial cartoon has been the elected public servant and other highly visible political figures. The following review of editorial cartoons takes a specific look at public servants who are not in the political spotlight. Through a review of editorial cartoons from 1999 to 2003, it becomes apparent that there are positive images of this type of public servants amid the numerous negative ones published daily.

Public servants are under constant attack, due in large part to the restraints under which they must work. Lack of resources and bureaucratic red tape lend themselves to the reoccurring editorial cartoons that are often critical. However, there are exceptional moments in history where editorial cartoons shed a positive light on public service. By focusing on editorial cartoons from 1999-2003, I will highlight examples of positive public service images following the events of September 11th as well as examples that predate September 11th.

## Literature Review

The editorial cartoon can trace its roots back thousands of years. Hoff (1976) suggests that early man had “motives in caricaturing himself, whether to challenge the wisdom of the Creator or to frighten away evil spirits, it became one of his favorite hobbies and remained with him down through the ages” (16). The modern editorial cartoon originated in Europe, while in the United States the first editorial cartoons are attributed to Benjamin Franklin (Hoff 1976, Tower 1982, Summers 1998). Franklin’s “Non Votis” (1747) and “Unite or Die” (1754) are some of the first political commentaries in cartoon format. Editorial cartoonists have not always been accepted by “high culture” but rather relegated to the roles of enthusiasts and painters in “secondary positions” (Sommers 1998). Although early editorial cartoons have been collected, their critical study

has not reached its potential (Sommers 1998). Editorial writing was initially recognized with an award by the Pulitzer Prize. By 1922, the Pulitzer Prize was expanded to include an award for editorial cartoons. During its first few years of being awarded there was a lack of worthy candidates (Saur 1999), but the editorial cartoon has since grown into a competitive artistic category.

Presenting a positive view of the public servant is not a universal goal among the arts. As Holzer (1991, 2) points out, “citizens in virtually all societies and political systems view civil servants as lazy, overpaid, bumbling bureaucrats who are obstacles to the productive delivery of public services—and that view is frequently reinforced by the visual artist”. Holzer (1991) highlights that, in addition to mediums such as cinema and television, cartoonists have also taken an “assault on bureaucracy.” Research by Lee and Padock (2001) highlights the scarce number of movies depicting the bureaucratic hero. However, they do note that the films with such a positive light are historically prominent films.

The street-level bureaucrats, as Lipsky suggests, are policy makers through their discretionary power. However, these decision-makers are forced to work within the constraints of limited resources. The street-level bureaucrat interacts daily with people, but there “is a high degree of uncertainty because of the complexity of the subject matter (people) and the frequency or rapidity with which the decisions have to be made” (Lipsky 1980, 29). In addition, Lipsky points out that the public servant is also constrained by working with very large case loads relative to their responsibilities.

Social workers are unable to make required home visits in public welfare work and are so inundated with paperwork that they are never without backlog... Lower-court judges are typically inundated with cases, often causing delays of several months... For teachers, overcrowded classrooms (with meager supplies) mean that they are unable to give the kind of personal attention that good teaching requires... For police officers, the obvious resource constraint is one of time- time to collect information, time to act (Lipsky 1980, 30).

Given high case loads, limited time and resources for a position where discretionary power dictates policy, it is no surprise that the public servant and the public bureaucracy are constantly under attack. Holzer (1991) doubts that any dramatic improvement in the image of bureaucrats as depicted in the arts will occur, as such images are too old and too ingrained. Rather, he suggests, there should be a dialogue between bureaucrats, academics, and critics (artist and writers); then “perhaps administrators will be able to laugh at themselves from within bureaucracies they trust and which carry out the public trust” (21). I would argue that there is a means by which an artist’s view of the public servant can change toward the positive (at least temporarily).

There have been cases in history where the public servant is portrayed in editorial cartoons in a positive light; however, they primarily focus on individuals, political figures in particular, as opposed to the area of public service as a whole. Although political figures are not necessarily talked about in the same discussions of street-level bureaucrats, they remain public servants. The assassination of U.S. presidents led to numerous editorial cartoons that were overall positive representations of the public

servant (Tuttle 1967). Poignant events in history can trigger in a period of positive editorial cartoons. The following review will highlight that editorial cartoons of the post- September 11th, 2001, period carried positive messages about public servants. However, the review of cartoons will also conclude that there was a period of positive views toward bureaucrats prior to September 11th.

## Methodology

The selection of editorial cartoons for this article review represents the author's discretion in identifying various forms of public service. The collection of editorial cartoons is not a national representation of all available cartoons, but rather a select sample accessible through the Internet and print format. A five year period was identified as the basis for reviewing the editorial cartoons (1999-2003). This period selection begins two years prior and ends two years after the events of September 11th. As we mentioned above, the events of September 11th were followed by a period of positive views toward public servants in editorial cartoons. This is highlighted by the first set of editorial cartoons. However, this review of collected editorial cartoons also represents positive views toward public servants prior to September 11th.

The cartoons collected come from various sources including the Internet, magazines, national and local newspapers, as well as a text focusing on the "Best Editorial Cartoons" for years, including the survey range (Brooks 2004). The reference section at the end of this article includes the authors/artists of the editorial cartoons reviewed, year of publication, and source of publication. Many of these cartoons may also have been published in different and additional publications.

As a means for viewing the type of public service representation, a matrix is used to place each editorial cartoon in proper context. A "matrix of fiction" was initially introduced by Holzer (1979) as a means to study the literature of bureaucracy. In 1997, the matrix was expanded into a "matrix of concern" focusing on communication through the arts. These two matrices were expanded to go

**Table 1. Matrix of Public Service – Editorial Cartoons 1999-2003**

	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Positive</i>
<i>Organizational</i>	(9 Arno)	(11 Vey)	(8 Dunlap-Shohl)
<i>Departmental</i>			(3 Bell) (5 Matson) (2 Casciar) (6 Stahler)
<i>Individual</i>			(1 Cagel) (4 Steiner)  (10 Plante) (7 Parker)

beyond concern and literature and adapted to portray negative and positive images represented through the arts. The Matrix of Public Service (Table 1) is set up to include positive, neutral and negative images of public service. It also focuses on different public service levels, beginning with “individuals.” In the case of editorial cartoons, none of the following selections used are at the individual level; this would require that the caricature represent an actual person either by name or distinguishing features. The selections primarily begin at the “departmental” level. The following cartoons include such departments as fire, police, military and education. The highest level within the Matrix is identified as “organizational,” which includes inter-departmental cartoons and images of bureaucracy in general. It is important to note again that the selection of cartoons is not statistically random, but rather represent accessible examples of public services from the five year span.

## Cartoon Reviews

(1) Cagle (2002) attacks American values through his editorial cartoon. More specifically, the cartoon highlights a warped definition of an American idol and a forgetful country. Borrowing from the popular television show about a search for an American pop singer, Cagle suggests that America has lost a proper perspective of what an American idol is. With the attacks of September 11th as the framework, the cartoon suggests that remembrance of heroes and victims has all but been lost or rather improperly replaced. The use of term “American Idol” compounds the



(1) Cagle, Daryl. "American Idol and 9/11 Memorial." *Cagle.com*, September 10, 2002. Reprinted by permission.



problem of not remembering the heroes and victims from September 11th. Idol is a term that can loosely be applied to pop singers and sports athletes. However, the true American idol might best be applied to the heroes of September 11th.

The editorial cartoon has singled out a fireman from the Fire Department of New York, a public servant that resurfaced as the quintessential hero and true American idol. The heroes of September 11th were also many of the victims of the attacks, but Cagle clearly points out that America has quickly forgotten them. The editorial cartoon was published one year after the attacks, and yet it is even more pertinent today as the American Idol show has only become increasingly popular. Cagle has chosen to make a case for the public servant as an American hero, and, although the cartoon can be characterized as critical humor at best, one clear message can be extracted from it: the public servants (firemen of NY) should not be forgotten as they are truly American idols. Cagle's cartoon fits well into the Matrix of Public Service (Positive-Departmental).



**(2) Casciari, James. "Democracy." *Vero Beach Press Journal*, April 13, 2003.** Reproduced by permission. Courtesy of Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers.

(2) The year 2003 was ridden with editorial cartoons about the war in Iraq. Many of the cartoons I came across were critical of President Bush and his decisions which led to combat in Iraq. However some editorial cartoons also point out that our soldiers were at the front lines

risking their lives. Casciari's (2003) cartoon uses the famous image of the soldiers raising the American flag at Iwo Jima during World War II. The soldiers are now fighting to establish "democracy" in Iraq. Although editorial cartoons are often caught up focusing on the political issues of the day, this cartoon refocused the issue on the public servant: military men and women. This cartoon fits into the departmental level of the positive side in the Matrix of the Public Service.



**(3) Bell, Darrin. "Postal Worker." *Editorialcartoons.org*. November, 1, 2001. ©2001 Darrin Bell, [www.Bellcartoons.com](http://www.Bellcartoons.com). Reprinted by permission.**

(3) The "Postal Worker" editorial cartoon follows the anthrax incidents in the United States (Bell 2001). Shortly after the attacks on September 11th a series of anthrax ridden letters were being mailed and opened, infecting postal workers throughout the East Coast. The role of the postal worker was lifted to national attention because of the anthrax attacks. This attention and concern for the postal workers was ultimately converted into a "heroic" perspective. The cartoon highlights the inclusion of postal workers as heroes alongside policemen and firemen. This cartoon looks at three types of public servants from a positive perspective of hero, building on the events of September 11th and anthrax letters. The store manager is scratching his head, troubled by the need to "make room" for the new shirts in the "hero" section of t-shirts. This editorial cartoon is placed in the positive section of the Matrix at the departmental level.



*"But, sweetheart, why do you have to marry a doctor?  
Why can't you marry a fireman?"*

**(4) Steiner, Peter. 2001. "Why Can't You Marry a Fireman?"**  
***The New Yorker*, November 12, 2001.** Reprinted by permission.

(4) The Steiner (2001) cartoon was published two months after the September 11th attacks. It reinforces the prominence that firemen were reaching in American society. A doctor can be viewed in contemporary society as an ideal husband. However, the role of the public servant surpasses the prominence of a doctor. The cartoon features a mother questioning her daughter's decision to marry a doctor and not a fireman. Prior to the September 11th attacks, the "doctor" and "fireman" in the caption of this cartoon could be swapped. The importance of the fireman is now viewed very differently in American society, and this cartoon emphasizes this change. Although this rise in prominence of the public servant to a distinguished role in society may not have universally surpassed that of a doctor, it has definitely positioned itself into such discussions. This editorial cartoon sits within the positive side of the Matrix of Public Service.

(5) In a reversal of roles, Matson (2001) replaces what are usually huge cartoon characters with public servants. The Macy's Thanksgiving parade is an annual celebration involving high-flying inflatable cartoon characters. Matson suggests that the Thanksgiving parade could also be acknowledging the public servant. Following the September 11th attacks, the role of the firemen and police officers were catapulted to the heights of everyday heroes. On a day of thanks, Matson presents a group to which





NEW YORK'S THANKSGIVING DAY PARADE

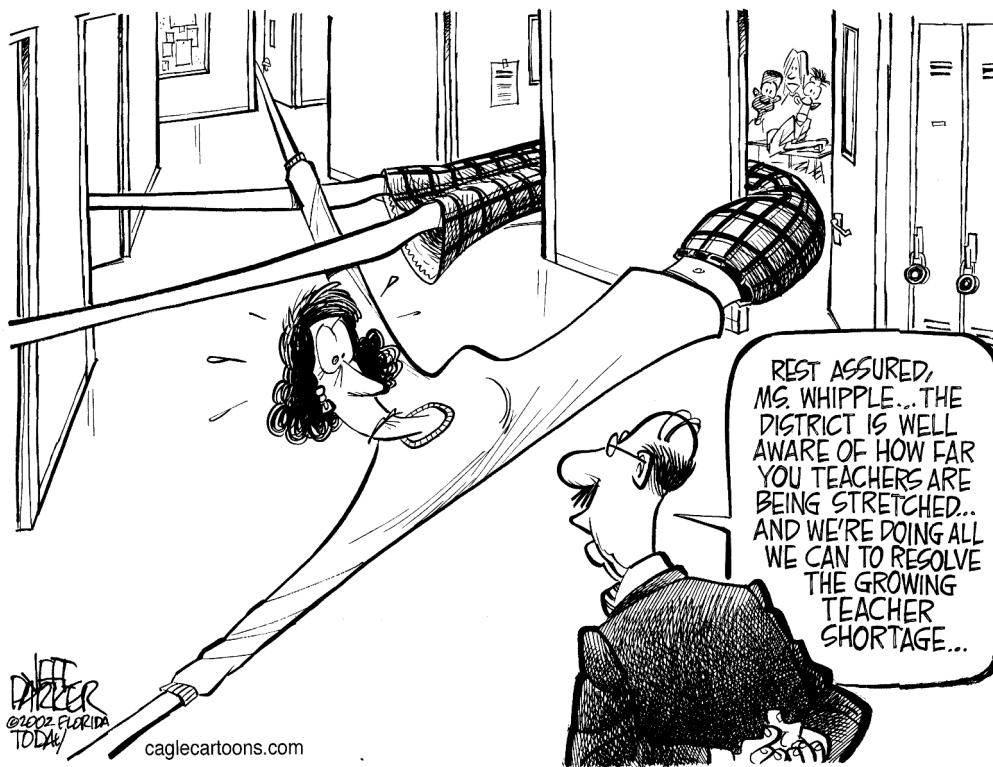
(5) Matson, R.J. "New York's Thanksgiving Day Parade." *New York Observer*, November 26, 2001. Reprinted by permission.



(6) Stahler, Jeff. "Firefighter Bedtime Story." *The Columbus Dispatch*, Ohio, September 10, 2002. Reprinted by permission.

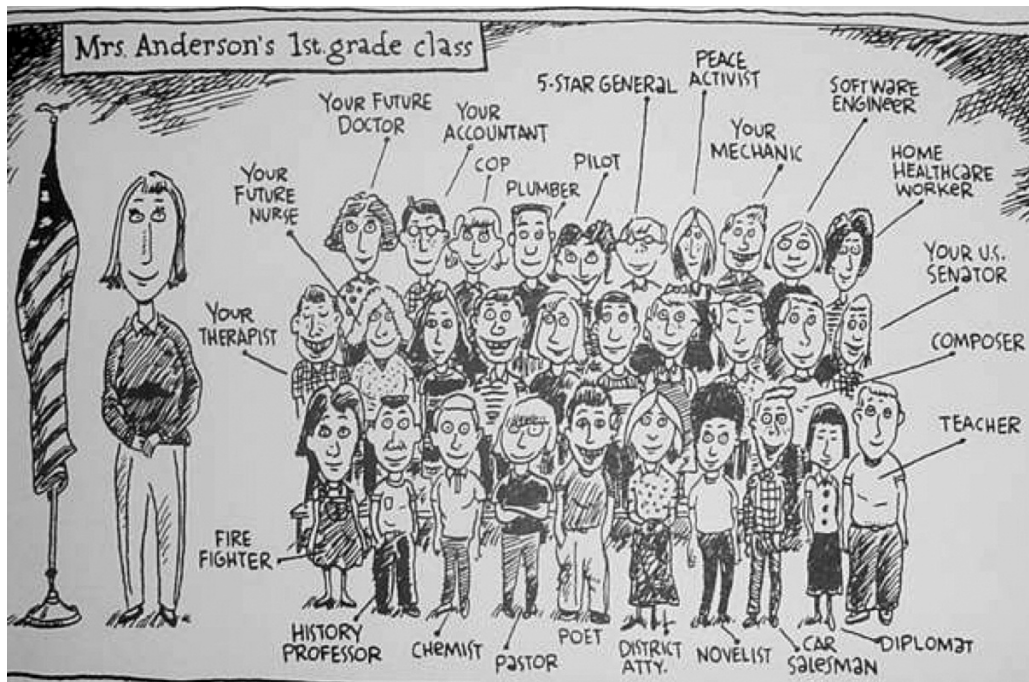
we should be thankful for: public servants. In addition, the doctor and what appears to be contamination or rescue worker are also included in the parade. Leading the parade are a fireman and policeman. This editorial cartoon fits in the organizational-positive side of the Matrix of the Public Service.

(6) Stahler (2002) provides a positive perspective of the public servant, firefighters in particular. The son is asking for a bedtime story. Such bedtime stories are usually reserved for exciting and heroic adventures. For the child to ask for a story about a firefighter suggests that public servants live heroic lives. Moreover, the child asks for “another firefighter story,” implying that there are numerous such stories. This editorial cartoon clearly positions itself into a positive framework and is placed in the departmental-positive section of the Matrix of the Public Service.



(7) Parker, Jeff. “Teacher Stretched.” *Florida Today*, October 31, 2002. Reprinted by permission.

(7) Parker (2002) looks at school teachers and the great lengths to which they are being stretched. Their roles and expectations are at an extraordinary crisis point because of a teacher shortage. The teacher is literally being stretched throughout the halls of the school, with the reassurance of the school administrator that they are “doing all [they] can” to resolve the teacher shortage. Parker exaggerates the ability of a person to be stretched and emphasizes the need for more teachers. This cartoon looks at the challenges of the public servant, providing a positive look at the school teacher as a result. This editorial cartoon is placed in the departmental-positive section in the Matrix of the Public Service.



**(8) Dunlap-Shohl, Peter. "Why Education Matters." *Anchorage Daily News*, 2003. Copyrighted material.** Reprinted by permission. *Courtesy of Anchorage Daily News.*

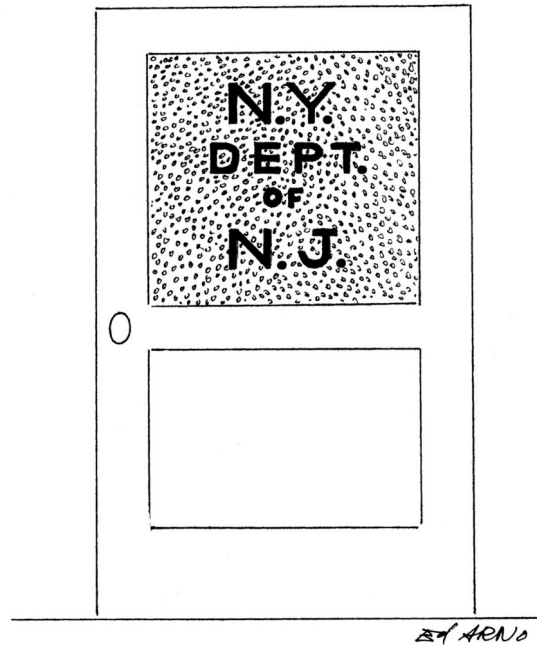
(8) The concluding editorial cartoon (Dunlap-Shohl 2003) punctuates the role of education and how our future depends on the education of future public servants. The students pictured in a class photo are identified by their future roles in society, and numerous public service occupations are included. In addition to such public servant roles such as teacher, firefighter, and police officer, the editorial cartoon highlights other public servant roles. There is a diplomat identified in the class, as well a U.S. senator. The home health care worker may be a public employee, and the five-star general represents the numerous public servants in the military. Ultimately, this cartoon is really important in emphasizing not only the importance of education but also the role of public servants in the same class as the artist, doctors and lawyers. This editorial cartoon is placed in the organizational-positive section of the Matrix of the Public Service.

### ***Cartoon Reviews Prior to September 11th***

(9) Arno's (1999) cartoon is focused regionally in the New York – New Jersey area, but the message of countless departments within bureaucratic organizations is universal. The cartoon simply portrays a door with the label "N.Y. Dept of N.J." This editorial cartoon is focused at the organizational level, and through its simplicity, is able to highlight what is often identified as a problem within government: unnecessary government departments. I have chosen to include this cartoon because it predates the attacks of September 11th. The cooperation between New York and New Jersey governments following the attacks highlights the possible need for such a bureaucratic organization as identified in the cartoon. This raises the question whether the cartoon would be viewed the same way



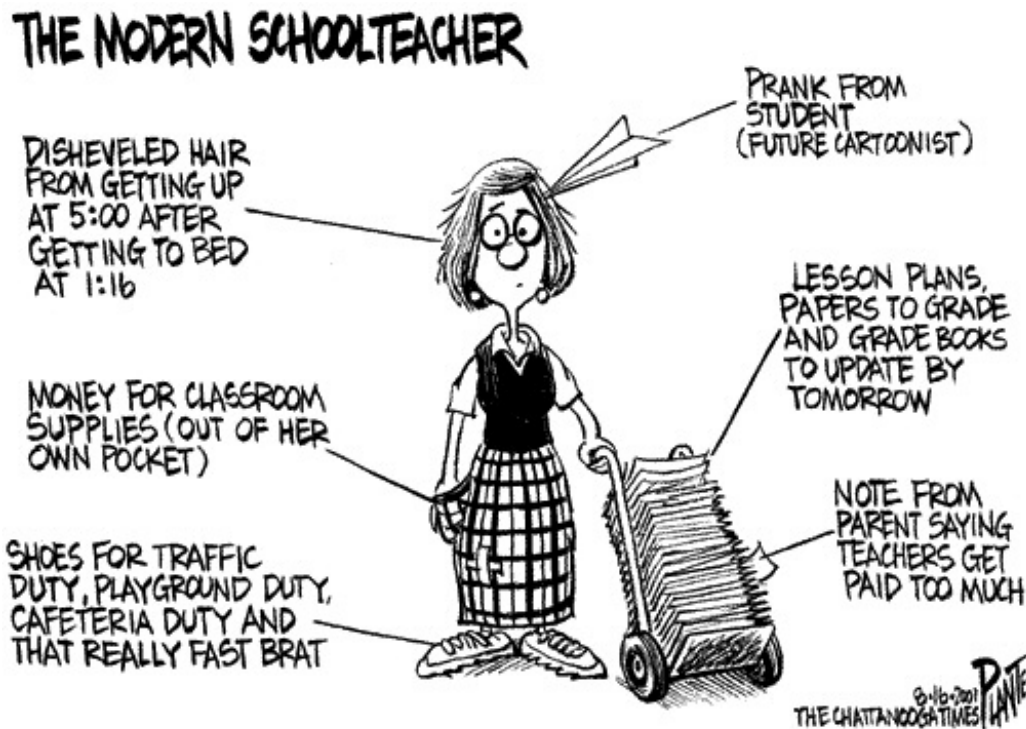
after September 11th. The impact of the attacks reframes how cartoons are viewed and lends support to the need for some bureaucratic entities. Amid the Matrix of the Public Service, this cartoon is closer to the negative side of the organizational level. It is the only cartoon of a negative nature that is included because it contrasts well to the perspectives of cooperation after September 11th.



**(9) Arno, Ed. "NY Dept. of NJ." *The New Yorker*, February 22, 1999.**  
Reprinted by permission.

**(10)** Plante's (2001) cartoon is making a statement of support for the "Modern Schoolteacher." The school teacher is faced with many challenges and yet they are under valued. The first commentary suggests that the school teacher works countless hours resulting in very little sleep from the lesson planning and paper grading. Next, the schoolteacher must use her own money for school supplies and also plays numerous roles beyond the teacher such as traffic guard, cafeteria and playground assistant. Finally, Plante suggest that the teacher is not respected by the students by the paper airplane in the hair and is not valued by the parents who complain about teachers being overpaid. Clearly this editorial cartoon looks at the public servant in a positive light by highlighting the challenges they must face. This cartoon falls under the departmental-positive section of the Matrix of the Public Service.

**(11)** Vey (2001) contrasts the public and private sectors. Vey argues that public service is the lesser of two evils. One character tells the other that they are leaving the public sector in favor of the private in order to do "more damage." This cartoon is not very favorable of either the public or the private sectors. Nonetheless, the role of the public sector is highlighted as being less of a damaging place than the private and in this case can be seen as providing some positive



(10) Plante, Bruce. "The Modern Schoolteacher." *The Chattanooga Times*, August 16, 2001. Reprinted by permission. Courtesy of Bruce Plante and *The Chattanooga Times*.

aspects. Therefore, I have chosen to place this editorial cartoon in the organizational-neutral/positive section of the Matrix of the Public Service.

## Conclusion

In closing, during a five year period (1999-2003), numerous examples of editorial cartoons that show public servants in a positive nature were published. Extraordinary events such as the terrorists' attacks, anthrax attacks, a shuttle explosion, and shortages in educational funds have provided the opportunity to highlight the importance of our public servants. The Matrix of Public Service outlines how the cartoons selected for this article are positive-side dominant. This is a result of a conscious effort to identify positive views of public servants within editorial cartoons. This was an exploratory research, which could benefit from future methodological approaches that result in a complete survey and statistical analysis of editorial cartoons in relation to public service.

The future of editorial cartoons will undoubtedly continue to have negative images of public service, but the collection of editorial cartoons presented here suggests that the artists may not necessarily have a vendetta against public service, but are rather reflecting contemporary society through art. The existence of positive views toward public service and public servants exist, even amid editorial cartoons.



*"I'm not against public service. I just think I can  
do more damage in the private sector."*

**(11) Vey, P.C. "I Am Not Against the Public Service." *The New Yorker*,  
January 15, 2001.** Reprinted by permission.

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# How a Bill Becomes a Law, Hollywood Style

*Mordecai Lee*

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## **Introduction: Literature, Scope and Methodology**

One of the distinctive elements of public administration, which separates it qualitatively and significantly from business administration and nonprofit management, is the context of public law in which it operates (Beckett and Koenig, 2005; Rohr, 2002; Seidman, 1998; Cooper and Newland, 1997; Rosenbloom and O'Leary, 1997; Kirlin, 1996). Government managers are bound by the directives and requirements of law, not just by internal managerial imperatives. On the federal level, Moe identified about 80 general management laws that federal civil servants must adhere to (2000, 39). Indeed, the role of Congress has been so central to federal public administration since 1946 that Rosenbloom termed it "Legislative-Centered Public Administration" (2000).

Given the importance of law to public administration and that citizens routinely interact with public administrators, what is the image of public law that citizens have? What are, in Lippmann's evocative phrase, "the pictures in their heads" (1997, chap. 1)? This article asks Lippmann's question literally: what is the visual image of lawmaking that exists in popular culture? Specifically, what do the movies tell the public about how a bill becomes a law? Furthermore, how accurate are those depictions? Finally, are they positive or negative in orientation?

The study of the image of the public sector in film has a well-established niche in academe. Generally, this literature views the relationship between movies and the audience as a two-way street. First, films can be analyzed due to their *impact* on shaping popular views of governmental institution. Second, films can be studied as *reflecting* popular culture and public opinion. This, of course, is a circular and interacting relationship, with films and public opinion simultaneously influencing and reflecting each other.

The literature of the portrayal of public administration in moving pictures is modest sized, largely



comprising articles and chapters (Wielde and Schultz, 2007; Lee and Paddock, 2001; Dubnick, 2000; Lichter, Lichter and Amundson, 2000; Gabrielian and Holzer, 2000; Holzer and Murray, 1995). On the other hand, the academic literature on the film image of the political side of government is much more extensive (Coyne, 2008; Booker, 2007; Giglio, 2005; Christensen and Haas, 2005; Keyishian, 2003; Scott, 2000; Gianos, 1998; Canning, 1997).

Political films and research about them focus largely on candidates, campaigns, and elections. When the attention shifts from those activities to holding public office, it is usually about chief elected executives (presidents, governors, mayors), rather than legislators. Finally, movies about legislators often portray them acting in their roles as politicians and public figures rather than performing strictly legislative duties. In part, this is an understandable tilt for movies. Lawmaking is a *process* and is rarely dramatic or action-based, making it unappealing for a visual medium (Giglio, 2005, 143 citing Canning, 1997). Still, the legislative process is at the heart of democratic governance. Therefore, this article is an inquiry into the film depictions of lawmaking at the federal level. The goal is to ascertain how the national legislative process is presented to the movie-going public and what these cinematic depictions suggest about pop culture's attitudes of, and knowledge about, the lawmaking process.

Given the large number of films with political content, the scope of this study must be drawn with specificity. First, the focus is on American national government. This excludes movies about lawmaking on the state level (*Blossoms in the Dust* [1941]\*; *All the King's Men* [1949] and [2006]) or those that are non-US based, such as lawmaking in the British Parliament (*Amazing Grace* [2006]) or in sci-fi, such as in *Star Wars'* Galactic Senate (Lee, 2000). Second, given the precision of the commonly used phrase 'how a *bill* becomes a *law*,' the review is of the lawmaking activities of the US Congress, not other legislative functions. This has the effect of excluding impeachment (*Tennessee Johnson* [1942]) and adoption of constitutional amendments.<sup>1</sup> It also excludes duties the Constitution assigns solely to the US Senate, such as confirmation of presidential nominations (*Advise and Consent* [1962]; *The Contender* [2000]) and approval of treaties (*Wilson* [1944]).

Third, while committee investigations can be a prelude to lawmaking, they often are oriented to oversight functions or other non-lawmaking goals (such as publicity for its own sake). Therefore, film depictions of Congressional investigations are excluded from the scope of the inquiry (*Godfather II* [1974]; *Protocol* [1984]; *Clear and Present Danger* [1994]; *The Aviator* [2004]), as are confidential briefings of the Congressional intelligence committees (*Bourne Identity* [2002]; *Sum of All Fears* [2002]). Fourth, the scope of the inquiry is limited to film depictions of the lawmaking process itself. This excludes films about federal legislators speaking on the floor of the Congress but not as part of a debate on a bill (*Manchurian Candidate* [1962]), a joint session of Congress to hear an address by the President (*Gabriel Over the White House* [1933]); on an inspection tour (*A Foreign Affair* [1948]; *Command Decision* [1948]); or talking with a reporter in his Capitol Hill office (*Lions for Lambs* [2007]). Similarly, it excludes legislators running for reelection (*Bulworth* [1998]); running for President (*The Senator was Indiscreet* [1947]); or heading a national conservative values lobbying group (*The Birdcage* [1996]). Finally, this is a study limited to films that were

produced for the big screen, rather than those produced for original broadcast on other moving visual arts such as network or cable television (*West Wing [1999-2006]*).<sup>2</sup>

Films that depict the federal legislative process were identified by reviewing the literature listed earlier in this section for references to potentially appropriate movies and by horizon-scanning techniques such as searches of digital databases such as the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) and TCM Movie Database. When possible, to confirm specific dialogue, if print versions of screenplays were available, they were examined. Some screenplays were located at libraries in the WorldCat database. Others were obtained from websites such as Awesome Film.com and the Internet Movie Script Database (IMSDb). For two movies, novelizations of the screenplays had been published and were available for examination.

These movies were then screened by the author if they were available and obtainable. As often happens in movie-making, sometimes the final dialog in the released version differs slightly from the screenplay. In those cases, the dialog from the film was relied on. During the screening process, movies that had only a single or a small number of glancing references to the legislative process were eliminated. Movies that included comedic elements, or were broad comedies or even satirical ones were deemed acceptable for the final list. However, films so farcical that they did not present (or pretend to present) the legislative process in any semblance of reality, were excluded.

As a result of these search parameters, process and methodology described above, a baker's dozen of 13 movies relating to Congress passing laws were identified and located. Each was then examined, including identifying the authors who wrote it; given that "their" movie reflected their own take on how a bill becomes a law. A short summary of the lawmaking scenes in the movie is presented below. It is then followed by text on the "lessons" of each movie regarding the legislative process, including this author's own commentary on which of those lessons were correct and which incorrect. In other words, what is Hollywood teaching the audience about how a bill becomes a law and in what details is it mis-teaching in this popular civics lesson?

### **Movies of Congressional Lawmaking**

*Washington Merry-Go-Round [1932]*. Story: Maxwell Anderson. Screenplay: Jo Swerling. Director: James Cruze.

A WWI veteran and blueblood is put up for Congress by a corrupt political machine, assuming he will be a dilettante and socialite in Washington, voting however he is told. But, the Congressman is determined to turn on the machine once in office and fight all political corruption in Congress. He zeroes in on H.R. 417, appropriating \$2 million for a restoration of a fort honoring a minor military character in the conquest of the West, General Phineas P. Digger. But the real beneficiary of the money would be the machine.

The Congressman's maiden speech will be to oppose the bill. He nervously sits in the House chambers, packed with members, when the Speaker intones:

The House will now proceed to the remainder of the calendar. All bills with favorable reports from committees will be considered as being passed unanimously without any vote, unless objection is raised when any title is read.

The clerk drones on, reading a long list of titles of bills. When he gets to HR 417, the freshman jumps up and loudly states his objection. He gives a passionate speech against the Digger bill, undiplomatically telling his new colleagues that "you haven't even read this bill." The Speaker interrupts him, "The gentleman's time has expired" and orders the Sergeant at Arms to remove the Congressman from the chambers, yet he continues speaking even while being dragged off the floor. However, by now he has drawn the members' attention to the bill and the tide turns against it. As he is being escorted out of the chambers, several members ask for his autograph. The Digger bill is defeated.

What the audience learns from this movie about how a bill becomes a law:

- Most members of Congress don't read in detail the bills they vote on (*correct*)
- In Congressional culture, a bill recommended by a committee is assumed worthy of passing on the floor. The burden is on the opponents to stop a bill, rather than the stereotype of the supporters of the bill having to justify passing it (*correct*)
- Most members are in their seats on the floor when a consent calendar is being read (*incorrect*)
- Members are swayed by debate (*usually incorrect*)

*Under Western Stars* [1938]. Screenplay: Dorrell McGowan, Stuart E. McGowan and Betty Burbridge. Director: Joe Kane.

This was the first feature film that Roy Rogers starred in. The working title of the movie was "Washington Cowboy." A selfish profit-oriented water utility in the West is releasing little water from its dam for downstream users and charging ranchers high prices for its water. This amplifies the drought conditions in the area. Roy is elected Congressman on a platform of free water. He convinces a powerful Congressman, apparently the chair of the House Appropriations Committee, to bring the Committee west for a public hearing. However, during the hearing the Congressman cowboy is accused of using footage demonstrating the conditions that actually were filmed in another region. This appears to doom his legislation. However, due to an actual dust storm that the Committee members experience, he convinces them that the drought situation and that the utility's manipulation of the water shortage are both real.

What the audience learns from this movie about how a bill becomes a law:

- Legislative success entails convincing a handful of influential legislators (*correct*)
- Legislative committees are the fulcrums of lawmaking (*correct*)

- While special interest groups (especially corporations) are very influential, giving a problem a tangible “face” that legislators experience can be persuasive (*sometimes correct*)

*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* [1939]. Screenplay: Sidney Buchman (1943). Story: Lewis R. Foster. Novelization: Charles Landery (1940). Director: Frank Capra.

This movie is the quintessential film about the legislative process. It contains a populist theme about the built-in corruption of the political system, but with the redemptive ending that good will win out. The motto of the movie is: “The only good cause is a lost cause.” Mr. Smith has become a touchstone of American popular culture, so widely recognized that other movies about the law-making have referenced it (see below: *The American President* [1995] and *Legally Blonde 2* [2003]).

The audience learns from the movie how a bill becomes a law. Here is how the movie explains what happens officially and behind-the-scenes after a bill passes *both* houses:

the Bill goes back to the Senate—and *waits its turn on the calendar again*. The Senate doesn’t like what the House did to the Bill. They make more changes. The House doesn’t like *those* changes. Stymie. So they appoint men from each house to go into a huddle called a conference and battle it out. Besides that, all the lobbyists interested give cocktail parties for and against—government departments get in their two cents’ worth—cabinet members—budget bureaus—embassies. Finally, if the Bill is alive after all this vivisection, it comes to a vote. Yes, sir—the big day finally arrives. And—nine times out of ten, they vote it down (Buchman, 1943, 613, emphasis in original).

The central plot is about an idealistic young man named by a governor to serve out the term of a sitting Senator who died. His goal is to introduce and pass a bill deeding some land for creation of a national boys’ camp. However, the state’s political boss had already decided behind the scenes to use that land to build a federal dam (which would greatly increase the value of adjacent land he and his allies had already acquired). The central plot is about the conflict between the naïve appointed Senator and the state’s political machine (represented by that state’s other Senator) over legislation designating the use of the land. The legislative fulcrum of the conflict is the Deficiency Bill that is awaiting Senate floor action. It contains a provision about the land, designating it for the dam. (Deficiency bills were relatively common during times of war and economic depression to pass emergency omnibus appropriations to fund a potpourri of federal programs that would otherwise run out of money before the end of the fiscal year.)

The film is very specific about parliamentary procedure on the floor of the Senate. For example, it highlights the difference between yielding the floor temporarily (such as for a question) or yielding it without guarantee of getting it back. The dramatic climax of the movie is when the ide-

alistic Senator engages in a filibuster to prevent the Senate from acting on a motion to expel him (based on forged documents manufactured by the political machine supposedly proving unethical behavior on his part) and then approve the Deficiency Bill as is. He uses the rules of the Senate to his advantage, for example, understanding that if he permitted the Senate to pass a motion to recess that was tantamount to giving up the floor.

His filibuster temporarily blocks his expulsion and passage of the Deficiency Bill. Finally, just as the filibusterer collapses from physical exertion (probably about 24 hours) the corrupt Senator emotionally confesses to all his misdeeds. Good triumphs. The bill will assign the land for the boys' camp. Fade out.

What the audience learns from this movie about how a bill becomes a law:

- Laws can be made through bills that address only one specific matter or through omnibus bills that contain scores, even thousands, of provisions (*correct*)
- The way a bill is introduced is by having the chief sponsor personally submit it from the floor of the Senate and read out loud its title to the entire Senate (*incorrect*)
- Bills go through several readings. After the first reading (introduction), it is usually referred to a committee for consideration (*correct*)
- An individual Senator cannot be forced to give up the floor once recognized to speak (*correct*)
- A filibuster cannot be stopped (*incorrect; a cloture vote can end a filibuster, but that requires obtaining the floor and a supermajority of votes*)
- A Senator who masters the intricate procedural rules of the Senate can gain an advantage in the lawmaking process (*correct*)
- The President of the Senate is the Vice President of the United States (*correct*)

*Born Yesterday* [1950]. Screenplay: Albert Mannheimer (1950). Stage Play: Garson Kanin (1969). Director: George Cukor.

In post-WWII Washington, a crass wheeler-dealer businessman seeks to pass legislation that would, covertly, prevent free competition for his illegal cartel of scrap yards. The "Hedges-Keller Amendment" supposedly promotes fair competition among domestic and foreign suppliers of scrap iron because it "guarantees government support of scrap iron price levels" (Mannheimer, 1950, 37). In reality, it is a subsidy to that single businessman, eliminates any financial risk for him of losing money due to falling prices, all the while fencing out foreign competition. Congressman Norval Hedges, the chief sponsor of the amendment, has accepted an \$80,000 bribe from the businessman to promote the legislation. Hedges claims that the legislation is merely an operationalization of his (presumably Republican) ideology: "This country will soon have to decide if the people are going to run the Government or the Government is going to run the people" (Mannheimer, 1950, 37).

However, in the course of the movie Hedges has trouble getting his amendment passed. He needs



more time to round up support for it, has to re-draft it, and the businessman will have to bribe other legislators. Meanwhile, the businessman's common law wife (who cares nothing for politics) falls in love with a journalist from the *New Republic* who is trying to write an exposé of the businessman. The two conspire to expose both the corrupt Congressman and the businessman. The woman, mal-quoting the reporter, says that the legislation is "the biggest swindle since – uh – the teapot!" (Mannheimer, 1950, 130, underlining in original). At the end of the movie, the woman has assisted the reporter in getting documentation to prove the bribery. The reporter tells the businessman:

legislation's not meant for buying and selling. ... Tell that Congressman of yours, Harry, he's all washed up. I guarantee it. And as far as you're concerned – you're not going to get away with it...not this time anyway (Mannheimer, 1950, 139-40, underlining in original).

What the audience learns from this movie about how a bill becomes a law:

- legislators accept bribes to pass legislation (*occasionally correct, probably incorrect in large part*)
- Innocuous sounding legislation may in reality be protections against fair competition and subsidies for specific special interest groups (*correct*)
- Ideological bumper sticker slogans can be used as vague covers for legislation that benefits the few at the expense of the many (*correct*)
- The surface of the legislative process does not necessarily show the realities of "who gets what" (*correct*)

*Washington Story (aka Mr. Congressman) [1952]*. Written and Directed: Robert Pirosh.

A WWII veteran is a straight-arrow Congressman from Massachusetts. He chairs a special committee to review bill No. 4422, the President's Naval Shipbuilding Dispersal Plan. As a Cold War security measure, it would shift inland some elements of shipbuilding from coastal shipyards. The Congressman opposes the bill, ostensibly on the merits. However, he begins wondering if his opposition is actually purely parochial, in order to assure reelection. At the executive session on the bill, the vote is 5-3 when the clerk turns to the chair to cast his vote. He declines to vote, saying it wouldn't affect the outcome anyway.

When the shipbuilding dispersal bill comes up for debate on the floor, the chambers are packed. The committee chair does not participate in the initial debate, continuing to leave the impression of his opposition to it. However, by now he is convinced that his position is solely based on political expediency and that the merits justify passing it. During the debate, a message arrives from the Senate. Standing in an aisle on the floor, a Senate clerk reads out loud the message that the Senate has just passed the dispersal bill. Returning to the pending business, the Speaker announces, "The question is on the engrossing and third reading" of the bill. The Committee chair



jumps up and asks unanimous consent to speak for two minutes. When it is granted, he states that he supports the bill on the merits. When he is done, some members call out “Vote!”, “Vote!” The bill passes 364-47. The Congressman assumes that his political career is over.

What the audience learns from this movie about how a bill becomes a law:

- Committee chairs often do not have to cast a vote (*incorrect*)
- Messages from the other house are announced out loud from the floor of the chambers by a clerk from the house that originated the message (*incorrect*)
- In legislative procedure, the last stage of passing a bill in one house is called third reading or engrossment (*correct*)
- Third reading is normally non-debatable (*incorrect*)
- Requests for unanimous consent to speak on a non-debatable motion are usually granted (*usually correct, except in moments of intense partisanship, after debate has been permitted and the request appears dilatory*)

*The Seduction of Joe Tynan* [1979]. Screenplay: Alan Alda. Novelization: Richard Cohen (1979). Director: Jerry Schatzberg.

A second-term liberal Democratic Senator from New York is successful at passing a public works bill to create temporary public employment during a recession. The passage of the bill marks his joining the elite of influential senators. As the next step, he agrees to lead a coalition of left-leaning special interest groups (including organized labor and civil rights groups) in opposition to a Supreme Court nomination. He is, again, successful. That, in turn, leads to him having presidential ambitions.

While most of the movie is about his opposition to confirming a presidential nominee, there are two scenes about the lawmaking process. The movie opens with Senator Tynan in mid-sentence, giving a speech on the floor of the US Senate urging passage of his public works bill. It is clear from his relatively flat delivery that he is reading the speech for the record, rather than trying to persuade any Senator present or engage in debate with opponents. A shot of the chambers shows few Senators on the floor and of those, none is paying attention. A shot of the presiding officer (presumably a junior Senator filling in for the Vice President) shows him visibly bored. In the next scene, Tynan is in bed with his wife (a psychoanalyst) in their New York home. He is crowing about passing the bill, “I got clout! My little subcommittee has power! D’you know how I did it? I said one word: ‘subcommittee’!” The movie does not explain that comment further (nor does the novelization at that point), but presumably he meant that his subcommittee was able to develop an expertise that other senators recognized and that the subcommittee did a good job of resolving as many criticisms of the bill as possible before reporting it out.

Later in the movie, Tynan is hurrying to the floor to cast a vote on floor amendment relating to safety and health standards. It is being sponsored by a colleague he is ideologically compatible with. An aide walks with him briefing him on the parliamentary situation: “He’s given up some

ground, but what's left is plenty good." A clerk is calling out the names of the senators in a monotone. Those present call out their position on the amendment, aye or no. The chambers are full, with most Senators at their desks. Tynan walks in just before his name is called and when it is his turn says, "Aye." He then sits down next to the chief sponsor of the amendment. It looks like it will be rejected. Tynan preemptively tries to console his colleague, "If you don't get it this session, you'll get it next time." The other senator glumly reveals to Tynan that there will not be a next time; he is not running for reelection. The novelization makes explicit what the movie visually hints at:

The man, Joe thought, was all indignation – cause and principle and everything fine. Trouble was, everyone knew, he couldn't get a damn thing passed. He never traded, never swapped, never did any of that. He always stood on principle and he nearly always stood alone (Cohen, 1979, 199).

Later, Tynan tells a senior Senator that Tynan has decided he will oppose the President's Supreme Court nominee, who the senior senator is sponsoring so that the nominee will not run against him in the next election. The senior Senator thunders his reaction: "You do this and no bill of yours will ever get out of my committee. ... Your little ol' subcommittee ain't gonna have much of a budget" in the next session of Congress.

What the audience learns from this movie about how a bill becomes a law:

- Key legislative work occurs in committees and subcommittees. Legislators will often defer to the expertise and choices of a committee or subcommittee and will support the bill that the committee or subcommittee recommends if the Senators trust its chair to have done a good job substantively and politically preparing the bill (*correct*)
- Senators trade votes; they go along to get along. If they do not, their legislative proposals tend to fail (*correct*)
- Senators do not necessarily cast votes on the merits (*correct*)
- Compromise is usually necessary to pass a bill (*correct*)
- Floor debate is a ritualized formality (*correct*)
- Most senators are at their seats during a roll call vote (*incorrect*)
- The House of Representatives is unimportant (*incorrect*)

*Suspect [1987]*. Screenplay: Eric Roth (2000). Director: Peter Yates. Novelization: Martin Meyers (1987).

To introduce the audience to a lead character (who subsequently is chosen for a jury in a criminal trial), the movie shows Eddie Sanger, a lobbyist for United Milk Producers, at work in the US Capitol. He is lobbying for a farm bill and has to convince some urban Members of Congress to vote for it. He is working with fellow lobbyist Walter (no last name in the movie, Abbott in the novelization [Meyers, 1987, 25]) who is described in the screenplay as having "the worn face of a veteran who rarely sees the light of day, who's lobbied through seven administrations, and is a

candidate for a heart attack” (Roth, 2000, 13). Walter tells Eddie that key Congresswoman Grace Comisky no longer can be counted on as a supporter of the bill and that eight to nine other urban legislators will follow whichever way she votes.

Sanger asks a page to deliver a note to Comisky asking her to come out of the chambers to a public area so that he can talk to her. She comes, but has a wary look on her face. She tells him that her blue collar constituents “don’t like government subsidies” (Roth, 2000, 15). Sanger reminds her of a political debt she owes him, “When you needed the crop states’ support for the car company bailout...I ran up the flag for you. I pulled a lot of votes” (Roth, 2000, 16). Nonetheless, she says she is going to vote against the bill. The hypocrisy of her voters’ contradictory opinions about subsidies for farmers versus car companies hangs in the air. Still, he fails to convince her on the merits or on the politics. Reaching, he then offers her a donation from milk farmers of a year’s worth of milk to the inner city lunch program in her district. Better than dumping it in the river due to low prices, he says. She is noncommittal but careful to say for the record that she can not be bribed.

Sanger quickly assimilates the significance of what Comisky has told him about her stance on the bill. He now recognizes from their conversation that the political landscape of the bill has changed and he may no longer have the votes to pass it. Without missing a beat, he quickly changes his strategy. He asks her if she’d support a *procedural* move to delay voting on the bill until after the Christmas break. That would give him time to round up votes for the bill. She reluctantly agrees but emphasizes that she will vote against the bill whenever the roll call eventually occurs and also that her support for the delay permanently evens out any political debts she still owes him.

What the audience learns from this movie about how a bill becomes a law:

- Lobbyists and legislators engage in trades, with each getting something they want (*correct*)
- Sometimes a procedural vote is as important legislatively as a substantive vote (*correct*)
- What happens in the hallways of the Capitol can be as important as what happens on the floor or in committees (*correct*)
- The legislative process is very fluid, with politicians reflecting even minute changes in public opinion. An effective legislative advocate (whether a member of Congress or a lobbyist) has to be fleet-footed in sensing those changes and quickly adapting to those new political realities (*correct*)
- Legislators feel free to change their minds and change positions on a bill (*partly correct and partly incorrect, depending on the individual legislator’s character*)
- Legislators always pay back political debts (*partly correct and partly incorrect, depending on the individual legislator’s character*)

*The Distinguished Gentleman* [1992]. Screenplay: Marty Kaplan (1992). Story: Marty Kaplan and Jonathan Reynolds. Director: Jonathan Lynn.

A con man has the same legal name as a long-time, but corrupt, Florida Congressman who dies

suddenly just before an election. Due to voters' habit of voting for that name, the con man gets elected. He realizes that the lawmaking process is a con writ large – and legal to boot:

My friends, I want to tell you about a town where the streets are paved with gold. This is a town where the marks take you to dinner after you f\*\*\* 'em. A town where when they need money, they just print more. ... Then there are these things called PACs, and these lobbyists, whose whole point in life is to buy you off. It's the con of a lifetime – and the damn thing is, it's legal! (Kaplan, 1992, 21-22)

Indeed, he gets elected and promptly tries to cash in on the money making opportunities associated with legislation. The freshman Congressman has lunch with a super-lobbyist who tutors him in the legislative process:

Lobbyist: *Where are you on sugar price supports?*

Congressman: *Sugar price supports. Where do you think I should be, Tommy?*

Lobbyist: *Shit – makes no difference to me. If you're for 'em, I got money for you from my sugar producers in Louisiana and Hawaii. If you're against 'em, I got money for you from the candy manufacturers...*

Congressman: *So Tommy, tell me – with all this money on every side, how does anything get done?*

Lobbyist: *It doesn't! That's the genius of the system!* (Kaplan, 1992, 62-63)

Leaving the floor of the House after casting a vote, he is working his way through a swarm of students on a field trip to the Capitol. Their teacher stops him and tells him, "We were just learning how a bill becomes a law." Asking for an explanation of what they just voted on, he grabs another Congressman who says, "It was a motion to reconsider the motion to reconsider" (Kaplan, 1992, 60B-61). While something of a laugh line, the explanation captures both the importance of parliamentary procedure in the legislative process and the tedium of passing a bill. Nothing like the drama and tension that movies thrive on.

Parliamentary procedure comes up elsewhere in the movie, too. An honest and reform-oriented Congressman objects to the leadership manipulating the lawmaking process to deny him a fair chance to amend a bill about to come up on the floor of the House. The Rules Committee has decided on a "rule" (i.e. the conditions by which the House will consider the bill) that prohibits any on-the-floor amendments. He complains: "It's a closed rule. I can't get my amendments on the floor. I can't get a recorded vote. I can't get squat." In reaction, a powerful committee chair is willing to give the *appearance* of a compromise but will not give ground on anything that *matters* in the lawmaking process: "we'll work something out on his amendments – not a vote. I won't go that far, but at least he'll get to say his piece from the floor" (Kaplan, 1992, 86-87).

Falling in love with the niece of the reform Congressman, who is a lobbyist for a public interest group, the con man decides to redeem himself by obtaining evidence of the wholesale buying

and selling of votes. He succeeds, but that makes him a pariah to his fellow legislators. As he cannot go back to Congress, in the final scene of the movie he laughingly says he has no choice but to run for President. Fade out.

What the audience learns from this movie about how a bill becomes a law:

- Parliamentary procedure is at the heart of the legislative process (*correct*)
- Campaign financing and other ways to channel money to legislators are legalized bribery (*correct*)
- The self-interest of incumbent legislators to stay in office affects the fate of legislation (*correct*)
- Reestablishing the public interest in Congressional consideration of legislation requires exposing this corruption (*probably correct*)
- The Senate is unimportant (*incorrect*)

*Born Yesterday* [1993]. Screenplay: Douglas McGrath. Stage Play: Garson Kanin (1969). Director: Luis Mandoki.

This is a remake of the 1950 movie (see above), with only modest updates to reflect the changes in politics over the four decades since the first version. The businessman is seeking Congressional action to prevent the closing of a naval base in Florida. He has built a housing and shopping development next to the base. If the base closes, instead of making a major profit from the development, he would go bankrupt.

The businessman is dealing with six Senators (rather than one Congressman in the 1950 version) and has paid each of them a \$150,000 bribe. The leader of the six is the chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, who is facing a tough re-election campaign and is desperately seeking to raise additional funds. One way that the businessman channels money to that Senator is by buying 40,000 copies of a book the Senator wrote.

In seeking to provide legal rationales for legislation to prohibit the Navy from closing the base, the claim is that the closure would affect the economy of the entire state and that the businessman is a major employer in the city adjacent to the base. If the development goes bankrupt, those people would lose their jobs.

What the audience learns from this movie about how a bill becomes a law:

- Legislators accept bribes to pass legislation (*occasionally correct, probably incorrect in large part*)
- Incumbents need large amounts of money to get reelected, and this may make them tilt their voting to advance their fundraising needs (*correct*)
- Incumbents can have trouble getting reelected (*largely incorrect*)
- Congress has used the lawmaking process to insert itself into largely administrative decisions, such as base-closings (*correct*)

- The Appropriations Committee is very powerful in the lawmaking process (*correct*)
- Appropriations are bills (*correct*)
- The publicly stated rationales for a law are not necessarily the true purpose for their enactment (*correct*)

*Dave [1993]*. Screenplay: Gary Ross (1992). Director: Ivan Reitman.

While the movie is largely about a president and his look-alike stand-in, the story is woven around a piece of legislation, the Simpson Garner works bill, relating to public works and human services funding, including homeless shelters. At the beginning of the movie, President Mitchell meets with Congressional leaders in a conference room in the White House (presumably the Cabinet room). He is angry that they have not killed the bill. He is against the bill but wants to avoid having to veto it. According to the screenplay:

[T]he President glares at a group of congressional leaders ... while they cower behind their water glasses.

President: *And if I kill it...I'll look like a prick!!! And I don't want to look like a prick!!!* (beat) *I want YOU to look like pricks!!!*

Speaker of the House: *Sir, we tried to kill it twice...*

Majority Leader: *Mr. President, with all the work your wife has done with the homeless...*

The President turns and stares daggers at him. The man starts to flumph as Mitchell cuts him off.

President: *Norman, I don't want you to do this 'cause you're forced to... (beat) I want you to do this because you want to. I want you to do it because you think it's the right thing to do. I want you to do it because you're acting in the best interests of our country...*

They stare back at him stupefied (Ross, 1992, 2-3A, emphasis in original).

However, the bill passes and then is vetoed. The president's senior aide explains the political philosophy underlying the veto to Mitchell's stand-in. He says that the bill would have spent \$650 million on homeless shelters – a lot of money. Later, the stand-in replies to the aide, “I think I've found some ways to put back the homeless section of the Simpson Garner works bill” (Ross, 1992, 71). It is not explained to the audience how a bill that was already vetoed (and therefore dead) could nonetheless still be amended.

What the audience learns from this movie about how a bill becomes a law:

- A president plays a major role in the legislative process, not just through the formal Constitutional powers of signing or vetoing bills, but also by working with Congressional leadership to affect the fate of bills (*correct*)
- Presidents can boss legislators around (*incorrect*)



- Legislators try to represent the wishes of a president of their own party but do not like to go against public opinion (*correct*)
- If a bill is vetoed, it can be amended (*incorrect*)

*American President* [1995]. Screenplay: Aaron Sorkin (1995). Director: Rob Reiner.

The movie is a romantic comedy/drama about widower and President Andrew Shepherd (a former University of Wisconsin professor of economics) romancing Sydney Ellen Wade, an environmental lobbyist. Part of the ongoing thread of the story is a relatively stringent clean air bill she is pushing and his administration's anti-crime bill. The pursuit of adequate votes in the House of Representatives (the Senate is unmentioned) for both bills provides the momentum and dramatic tension of the plot. There are war rooms for both bills, in the offices of the environmental group for the former and in the White House for the latter. Aides are seen wheeling and wheedling votes over the phone.

This plot device requires ongoing references to the legislative process. Examples include:

President: *Tell them I will send 455 [the energy bill] to the floor* (Sorkin, 1995, 8).

A. J. [White House Chief of Staff]: *We want to announce the crime bill at the State of the Union, which is 72 days from today. The last nose count put us 18 votes short* (Sorkin, 1995, 10).

Wade: *Three more votes [for the energy bill] and the President sends it to the Hill* (Sorkin, 1995, 115A).

President: *Tomorrow morning the White House is sending a bill to Congress for its consideration. It's White House Resolution 455, an energy bill* (Sorkin, 1995, 148A/149).

The movie pays homage to *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* [1939], the quintessential "how a bill becomes a law" movie. The first time Wade goes to the White House to lobby for the environmental bill, she excitedly refers to the movie as she goes through Secret Service security at the entrance to the White House (Sorkin, 1995, 20).

What the audience learns from this movie about how a bill becomes a law:

- Presidents and special interest groups lobby members of Congress for their votes on specific bills and sometimes engage in trade-offs and compromises to obtain a majority of votes (*correct*)
- Presidents who are popular have an easier time passing their bills than presidents who are unpopular (*correct*)
- A President introduces bills (*incorrect*)

- Bills are referred to and numbered based on a White House numbering system (*incorrect*)
- A resolution is the same as a bill (*incorrect*)
- A President decides when to send a bill to the floor of the House for a vote (*incorrect*)

*Legally Blonde 2: Red, White & Blonde* [2003]. Screenplay: Kate Kondell. Story: Eve Ahlert, Dennis Drake and Kate Kondell. From the character in a novel: Amanda Brown (2001). Director: Charles Herman-Wurmfeld.

Elle Woods is a recent Harvard Law grad but also a combination stereotype of the dumb blonde, *Cosmo girl*, sorority sister, and Valley girl. A devoted consumer of beauty products and dog grooming, she is appalled when she learns that cosmetic companies use dogs and other animals to experiment on during the product development process. She decides to go to Washington to convince Congress to pass a law banning the use of dogs and other animals by companies developing beauty products. This makes the legislative process the central thread of the movie.

Woods is hired as a temporary legislative assistant to a Congresswoman who was in the same sorority. Her sole assignment is to pass the bill, which the Congresswoman ostensibly supports. Woods learns the basics of how a bill becomes a law the hard way, in stops and starts, failures and recoveries. She comes to understand that few bills pass, that many bills are not even considered at all, and that bills advancing through the legislative process do not always reach the finish line.

The central comedic theme is that Woods overcomes each of the legislative obstacles to passing the bill by pursuing unorthodox methods. These unorthodox methods involve relating to legislators based on her non-political commonalities with them, such as dog owners, former sorority sisters and women interested in beauty tips and new hairdos.

Nonetheless, the movie highlights major stations in the legislative process, including introduction, committee consideration and floor debate. In an unusual twist in the standard “how a bill becomes a law,” Woods successfully sponsors a discharge petition. The signatures of an absolute majority of the members of the House (218) are required on such a petition to take the bill from the committee and bring it directly to the floor for a vote. A dramatic climax of the movie is how she successfully induces the required number of Members to sign the petition in order to accomplish this rarely used parliamentary technique.

The movie makes reference to pop culture icons of the legislative process. A short clip of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* [1939] is shown on TV while Woods talks on the phone to her fiancé and the movie’s soundtrack includes a verse from the television series *Schoolhouse Rock* called “I’m Just a Bill” (Frishberg, 1975). In another scene, Woods is shown reading a (mock) book titled *Everything You Wanted to Know About How to Pass A Law\**: *\*But Were Afraid to Ask*, a takeoff on the 1969 bestseller about sex.

What the audience learns from this movie about how a bill becomes a law:

- It is difficult to pass a bill (*correct*)
- Support of key legislators, such as committee chairs, is vital (*correct*)
- In highly unusual circumstances, a discharge petition can successfully pull a bill from committee (*correct*)
- The Senate is unimportant (*incorrect*)

*Thank You for Smoking* [2006]. Screenplay and director: Jason Reitman (2007). Novel: Christopher Buckley (2006 [1994]).

Nick Naylor is a lobbyist for the tobacco industry, but unorthodox in his approach. He does not hide from awkward situations (such as talk show confrontations with cancer victims), admits that smoking is unhealthy and agrees that it should be illegal for minors to buy tobacco products. Vermont Senator Ortolan Finistirre, chair of the Tobacco Subcommittee, is trying to pass a bill that would change the warning required on all cigarette packs from words to a skull and bones image, symbolizing that tobacco is a poison. Naylor and the Senator engage in an indirect debate about the bill via the news media and talk shows.

In a showdown at a public hearing on the bill held by Finistirre's subcommittee, Naylor turns the tables. He suggests that Vermont cheese, loaded with cholesterol, was a leading cause of heart attacks and, therefore, should carry a similar warning. The parr is successful. Exiting the hearing room, Naylor's former boss (who had fired Naylor for a damaging interview) congratulates him, saying he "just checked the whip count. The bill is going down in flames" (Reitman, 2007, 97), and offers to rehire him. Naylor declines and opens his own lobbying and consulting firm to work with other industries under attack.

What the audience learns from this movie about how a bill becomes a law:

- Passing a bill is partly a battle for favorable publicity (*usually correct*)
- Successfully reframing a bill can change the battle lines of public and legislative opinion (*correct*)
- Public hearings make a difference (*usually incorrect*)
- Legislators' changes in opinions on a bill can be counted by the whip's office within minutes of the end of a hearing (*incorrect*)

## Summary

What has Hollywood taught Americans about how Congress passes a law? Several generalizations emerge from these 13 motion pictures. Regarding the *formal* stages of the process, movies have largely portrayed the process accurately, including occasionally alluding to the more arcane aspects of parliamentary procedure, such as "rules" attached to bills going to the House floor and discharge petitions. There were only a few outright errors about lawmaking, as contrasted to the

civics lessons that most high school students are subjected to or as covered in such introductory Political Science courses as “American National Government 101” in US colleges and universities. In that respect, Hollywood *is* teaching civics and doing so relatively correctly.

This baker’s dozen of American movies about federal lawmaking also delve into the *political* aspects of the process. Most of them indicate the importance of influential Committee chairs and of the central role of compromise. Similarly, most confirm to Americans the corruption of politics – whether circa 1932 or in the 21st century. The inordinate power of special interest groups, especially through financial rewards (legal and illegal) are portrayed again and again on the large screen. This reinforces the cynicism of the American public towards politicians in general, and lawmaking in particular. However, that cynicism is justified and these movies were merely reflecting reality. Hollywood cannot be accused of fostering a cynicism that would not otherwise exist or in inaccurate depictions of reality.

However, the bicameralism of the federal legislative process is largely absent from these Congressional movies. All of the thirteen films presented details of a bill being considered by one house and most ignored the requirement that the bill pass the other house. For example, while *Mr. Smith* glancingly referenced the process of consideration in the other house, all the scenes in the movie were about passing it in the Senate. Conversely, all the scenes in *The Distinguished Gentleman* and *Legally Blonde 2* were about getting a bill just through the House. The absence of tracking a bill through both houses is understandable, given the many steps and the difficulty of maintaining dramatic or comedic tension. This is similar to how the child- and entertainment-oriented TV short “I’m Just a Bill” (from the *Schoolhouse Rock* series) gives detailed attention to what needs to happen for a bill to pass in the House, and then glibly states: “Then I go to the Senate and the whole thing starts all over again” (Frishberg, 1975).

Of the thirteen movies, eight focused on lawmaking in the House of Representatives and only half as many, four, on the Senate. (One did not show a preference.) While the “n” is too small for any sophisticated quantitative techniques to yield definitive conclusions, this difference might suggest that perhaps movie makers think the House is more interesting cinematically than the Senate. The greater focus on the House than the Senate is the opposite of the balance of contemporary network news coverage, which tends to give greater attention to Senators over Members of Congress. Perhaps the medium of movies finds larger-sized houses more interesting than smaller ones. One reason might be the expectation that characters with quirks are more likely to be found in a body with more members than those with fewer.

In sum, several generalizations emerge from these movies about Hollywood’s Congress, two accurate, the third inaccurate. First, law making is a formal process about how a bill becomes a law. Movies indeed show that each step is important. Details count. Failure to pass just one of many hoops dooms legislation. Few bills make it to the finish line. A sophisticated knowledge of the process, such as parliamentary procedure, can make a difference between success and failure. Second, the informal and below-the-surface aspects of lawmaking are just as important as the

formal ones. Movies show the importance of lobbying, obtaining the support of key committee chairs, and the group dynamics of a legislative body. Third, the movies fail to convey the significance of a bi-cameral legislative body by focusing almost exclusively on one house. Whatever dramatic events have occurred in the house shown in the movie, everything has to happen all over again on the other side of Capitol Hill.

## Conclusions

Not all movies are created equal. *Mr. Smith* has achieved a landmark status in pop culture that is enduring. An indication of its universal recognition is that two other films about lawmaking “quote” it. So, it would be inaccurate to treat each of these thirteen movies as even, such as in a purely mechanical formula. *Mr. Smith* is more important, lasting and impactful than, say, *Legally Blonde 2*. This is a difficult status to quantify but an important point, nonetheless. Certainly, the quality and power of *Mr. Smith* is partly the reason. The contributions of the writer, director and star Jimmy Stewart are exceptional. The original version of *Born Yesterday* is probably also an enduring classic.

But most of the other movies in this list are of secondary or even lower tiers. They are passing entertainment (or worse) and will never be in any top 100 lists. Many will be quickly forgotten. Perhaps a few will have longer lasting impact. For example, cable channels aiming at a female audience have been presenting (at the time of writing) *American President* on a recurring, even frequent, basis. It could be that repeat airings will give that movie the kind of “legs” that other equally commercial movies on this list will not have. At the very least, the frequency of broadcasting *American President* is a judgment by network executives that their demographic responds positively to the movie (a so-called “chick flick”) and that it has become a favorite by the female audience for repetitive viewing. This is an early indication of this movie sinking a bit deeper into pop culture than most.

However, another context is probably just as important in differentiating *Mr. Smith* and, to a slightly lesser extent, the first version of *Born Yesterday* from the rest of the pack. In 1939, when *Mr. Smith* was released, there was much less competition for public attention from other entertainment media. Even by 1950, when *Born Yesterday* was released, the medium of television was just beginning to have an impact on how citizens dedicated their entertainment time. After that, the media universe got more and more crowded. By now, at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, movies compete with traditional (over-the-air) national TV networks, cable networks, websites, video games, webisodes, blu-ray discs and so many other emerging and competing forms of visual entertainment. Movies, by definition, have a smaller and smaller impact on pop culture at-large.<sup>3</sup>

Faculty in public administration and other related disciplines sometimes use film for pedagogic purposes. Also, given the intense interest in visual entertainment by the upcoming generations of higher education students, the use of films can be a hook for such visually oriented students. How-



ever, this entire slate of movies about lawmaking is not fully worthy of pedagogic use. For example, the lobbying scene in *Suspect* lasts only a few minutes and is a device to introduce the personality of one of the lead characters. Conversely, *Legally Blonde 2* is entirely about the law making process but is a low quality movie that is not deserving of any classroom attention. The most likely applicability of any of the movies presented here would be in courses on public law that are often offered as part of MPA programs, undergraduate offerings or non-MPA public affairs courses.

For students in public law courses, some of these movies could be relevant for pedagogic uses. Rather than group viewing, an instructor could, for example, permit individual students (or small groups) to sign up to view one of the movies presented in this article. Presumably, the list would be narrowed to those movies that are largely and continuously about the law making process and are of higher quality. Likely candidates are *Mr. Smith*, *Born Yesterday*, *Washington Story*, *Seduction of Joe Tynan*, *American President* and *Distinguished Gentleman*. Students could be invited to report (orally to the rest of the class including showing snippets or in writing) on what the movie teaches about the public law process and how it fits – or does not fit – with course readings and discussions. The key pedagogic questions for students to focus on could be: (1) What parts of the movie reflect the real world of lawmaking and how so? (2) What is the significance of these relatively accurate depictions of lawmaking to an analytic and textured understanding public law?

That Hollywood views lawmaking as dramatic enough to be included in a movie is a significant statement. Generally, American culture views politics and government as boring, dull, unimportant, and irrelevant. The implicit message of these thirteen movies is that lawmaking can be dramatic, interesting and important. If how a bill becomes a law is dramatic and engaging enough for cinematic needs (a high hurdle, given the needs of the medium for action), then perhaps a viewer will conclude that the process might also be dramatic and engaging enough to be interested in as a citizen.

A final interesting trend in this small universe of thirteen movies is that about half (six) were released in the last two decades, with the other half (seven) covering the preceding six decades. This suggests an increased interest in politics, especially as a backdrop for mass entertainment, usually comedies. That government should be a butt of jokes is a tradition in American political culture dating as far back as the founding of the Republic, but the increased focus is perhaps a slight confirmation of the sense that the contemporary quality of Congressional lawmaking is indeed worse than “usual.” If that is the case, then this is another signal of the pressing need for political reform in Washington.

Such reforms would also, to return to the starting point of this discussion, be positive for public administration. Improving the quality of how a bill becomes a law is inextricably linked to improving government management. The outputs of the lawmaking process undergird the entire structure of public administration. They are the “what” and the “how much” of running a government agency. In the long run, these recent movies about the positives and negatives of modern lawmaking will help improve public administration by subliminally calling for reforming the broken, even corrupt, contemporary political process on Capitol Hill. Public administration would be the better for it.



\* Note on style: To differentiate parentheses which are APA-style citations of sources from movie titles, the latter are presented in *italics*, with the year of general release following in italicized *[brackets]*.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The only example this author located was a garbled discussion in *The American President* relating to the adoption of the Bill of Rights by the 1st Congress (Sorkin, 1995, 68).

<sup>2</sup> The author of *The American President*, Aaron Sorkin, was subsequently the creator of the long-running TV series *West Wing*, also relevant to law-making, but outside the scope of this inquiry.

<sup>3</sup> I greatly appreciate this insight from one of the anonymous reviewers and am pleased to acknowledge his/her interesting and constructive suggestion that strengthened my analysis.

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# **Keeping the Vision Alive: The Role of Networks in National Memorial Building**

## *A Case Study of the Vietnam Women's Memorial and the Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial*

*Amy Probsdorfer Kelley and John C. Morris*

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### **Introduction**

This is a tale of two memorials on the National Mall. Both memorial sites are located within Constitution Gardens National Park, commonly referred to as a part of the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The initial actions to build both memorials occurred in 1984. Both memorials commemorate a piece of history previously forgotten or obscured. Both memorials honor Americans' selfless participation in wars for freedom. One memorial, the Vietnam Women's Memorial, was dedicated in 1993. Across Constitution Lake, however, the site for the Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial (now called the National Liberty Memorial) lays fallow. What explains the divergent histories of these two memorials?

The lengthy timeframe can partially be explained by the complicated, twenty-four-step process of memorial building on federal property in the District of Columbia. However, this does not explain why the Vietnam Women's Memorial (VWM) was dedicated less than ten years from its initiation or why, after twenty-five years from its initiation, the Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial (BRWPM) remains un-built. Defining policy as government decision-making, the construction of a national memorial is one of the most symbolic, visible manifestations of national commemoration policy. Defined as such, we can turn to network theory for an explanation of the disparity between the VWM's and the BRWPM's building campaigns. After similar policy formulation and initiation stages, the VWM Project's effective use of its diverse network during the



**The Vietnam Women's Memorial**



**The Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial**



implementation stage resulted in successful construction and dedication of the memorial while the BRWPM Foundation's failure to capitalize on its network has kept the BRWPM from becoming a reality.

This paper examines both the events that unfolded in each of these two projects, as well as the people involved in the efforts to bring the memorials to fruition. Placing a monument in a public space is an overtly public act, particularly when that monument is on the National Mall in the nation's capital. What makes this analysis more interesting is that the efforts for each memorial under study began in the same year. Both projects had the support of powerful and influential people, yet the outcomes of the two efforts were quite different. We believe that an examination of the various players in the two processes, and the interactions between them, can lead to a greater understanding of how Americans choose groups to honor in our public spaces.

## **Network Theory**

This paper employs network theory as a heuristic to understand the social dynamics of monument selection. Networks are "structures of interdependence involving multiple organizations or parts thereof ... [with] some structural stability but extend beyond formally established linkages and policy-legitimated ties" (O'Toole, 1997, 45). Essentially, networks in the policy realm involve social actors and the relationships, or linkages, among them.

Network strength can be assessed based on how interconnected it is, which is defined by frequent contact among actors within and outside the policy process, and how cohesive it is, as defined by the actors' degree of empathy to other actor's objectives (Bressers and O'Toole, 1998). Closely integrated, or cohesive, networks are better able to resist change. Networks may or may not mobilize into a shared-action group, such as an advocacy coalition (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993) composed of public and private actors who share common beliefs and attempt to influence government to achieve their goals. Potential, or latent, actors may be mobilized into action by an event (Milward and Walmsley, 1984). In addition to the expertise of their members, the coalitions' ability to achieve their goals depends on a variety of external factors, such as public opinion, technology, changes in administration or national mood, and national economic fluctuations (Sabatier, 1988; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

Later in this paper, we will diagram the VWM's and the BRWPM's networks during the policy formulation stages of the memorials and compare them to the networks in place during their respective implementation phases. These diagrams are meant to be illustrative only, and are not intended to state exact relationships. Our overall purpose is to focus on the people, the stories, and the events that unfolded through the efforts to bring these two memorials to fruition. The use of network theory is limited to placing people in a broader framework of interaction.

We distinguish between one-time participants and primary participants. One-time participants, either those who give one-time financial contributions or provide one-time legislative support or

testimony, assume a peripheral place in the network. Conversely, boards of directors, primary congressional sponsors, and people or organizations who repeatedly engage or mobilize others are core members. Diagramming the networks of the VWM and the BRWPM reveals their extent and integration – characteristics that can be examined to evaluate the relative success of the two memorials' development.

## **The Memorial Building Process**

The twenty-four step process for memorial construction in Washington D.C. generally progresses from legislative to administrative in nature or, alternatively, from policy formulation and initiation to policy implementation. Throughout the process, the “limitations ... on the reach of direct governmental intervention encourage rather than dampen networked approaches” (O’Toole, 1997, 46). According to Watkins (2006), the legislative process begins when a memorial sponsor finds a Representative or Senator who is willing to draft legislation to authorize the memorial. The congress member drafts legislation in consultation with staff from the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) and the authorizing committees<sup>1</sup> and introduces a bill authorizing the memorial and designating the sponsor responsible for it at no initial cost to the federal government. The authorizing subcommittees hold hearings, take action, and send the bill to the full House and Senate for voting. Congress passes the bill into law and the President signs it (Watkins, 2006). Nimble maneuvering within legislative networks is important during this authorization, or policy initiation, process.

After the authorization is signed into law, the sponsor begins the implementation phase. According to Watkins (2006), the sponsor organizes an administrative entity and begins fundraising. If the sponsor requests a site in Area I,<sup>2</sup> the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with NCMAC, determines whether the subject is of “preeminent and lasting historical significance” according to the Commemorative Works Act and notifies Congress to authorize the Area I location. The sponsor works with NCMAC to identify potential sites and prepares an alternative site study and environmental analysis, which they submit to the National Park Service (NPS)<sup>3</sup> for approval. NPS approves the site and submits it to the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) for approval; and the State Historic Preservation Officer for comment. After approval, the sponsor begins a design competition from which a preferred design concept is selected. The sponsor submits the concept to the NPS, incorporates comments from the NPS, the CFA, the National Capital Planning Commission and the State Historic Preservation Officer, and refines the concept, then repeats the process with the preliminary design, the draft design, and the final design. Once the final design is approved, the sponsor finishes fundraising and submits final drawings and specifications, a cost estimate, and evidence of funds on hand<sup>4</sup>, plus 10 percent payment of design and construction costs. The NPS issues a construction permit and the sponsor begins construction and prepares operation, maintenance, and preservation plans. After completion and dedication, the memorial is transferred to the NPS for management (Watkins, 2006). Maneuvering within administrative networks is imperative during this implementation stage (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984) of memorial building.

## Vietnam Women's Memorial

The story of the Vietnam Women's Memorial really begins with the 1982 dedication of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, commonly known as "the Wall." Maya Lin's design for the Wall elicited negative feelings among many veterans, who saw its abstract, low profile landscape design as un-heroic. A compromise was reached in 1984 when a bronze figurative statue of three American servicemen, one black, one white, and one Hispanic, and an American flag, were erected across from the Wall to be "consistent with history" (Frederick Hart in Evans, 1993). However, these words rang false for one Vietnam veteran, Army nurse Diane Carlson Evans, who knew firsthand that men were not the only group to serve in Vietnam (Evans, 1993). In fact, eight female Army nurses died in Vietnam. Evans feared that their story and the story of all female Vietnam veterans would "slip into history unrecognized and forgotten, compounding the myth that either they did not serve or their service was not noteworthy" (Evans, 1993, 2).

Galvanized into action by the debates about the *Three Servicemen* statue, Evans gave her first speech calling for a women's memorial at Lions Club event, where she received a standing ovation (Evans, 1993). After discovering a talented sculptor, Roger Brodin, she held the first organizing meeting in February 1984. The core group of nine founders organized into a non-profit fundraising organization and commissioned Brodin to create a statue of a military nurse, entitled *The Nurse*. Among the original core members were Gerald Bender, a former Marine, and a former Army nurse Donna-Marie Boulay (Abdella, 1988).

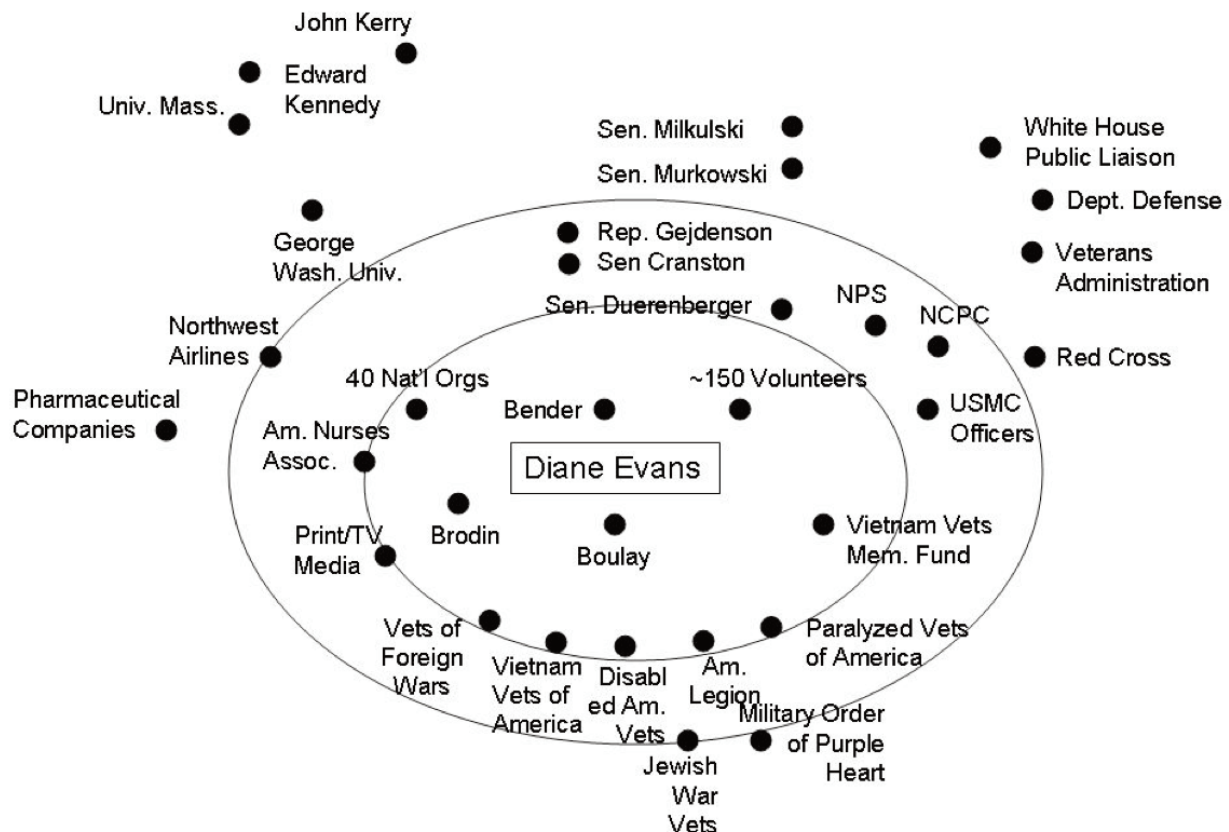
Evans and the founding, core group determined that it was best to build grassroots support from the American public before approaching Congress; therefore, they took important steps to broaden their network of supporters. Through research, Evans discovered that almost sixty additional women died in Vietnam while working for government or humanitarian organizations. By broadening their cause and their name, from the Vietnam Nurses Memorial Project to the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project (VWMP), the network acquired additional reach and capacity. In February 1985, the founding group met with the White House Office of the Public Liaison, as well as women from the Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration, the Red Cross, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Evans, 1993). This successful meeting legitimated their cause and gave them knowledge of and access to veterans' groups for fundraising.

Evans spent 1985 mobilizing five major veterans' organizations to help with grassroots support: the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Disabled American Veterans, the American Legion, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Vietnam Veterans of America (Evans, 1993). After visiting local chapters, she attended district and state conventions and spoke at each of their national conventions (Evans, 1993). Soon she had each major organization, representing six million members, as well as the Military Order of the Purple Heart and the Jewish War Veterans, as active members of the VWM network (Green, 1991). Next, the core members of the VWMP mobilized volunteers and empowered them to represent the organization at local civic groups and humanitarian organizations; through these volunteer ambassadors, they soon received endorsements from

forty national organizations (Evans, 1993). The network's initial efforts also reached out to legislators and members of academia who were empathetic to their cause. The VWMP's first major fundraising event was co-sponsored by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences at the University of Massachusetts, with Senator John Kerry (D-MA), a Vietnam veteran, as a speaker (Evans, 1993). Finally, the VWMP linked to the business community, soliciting donations from wide-ranging enterprises as pharmaceutical companies and Northwest Airlines, who transported *The Nurse* on its nationwide tour (Evans, 1993). In the spring of 1986, the VWMP solicited and received the endorsement of John Wheeler and Jan Scruggs of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, the group who built the Wall, and who easily could have become the VWMP's primary opposition (Evans, 1993). The integration of legislative supporters, business contacts, representatives of academia, and both national and veterans' organization ensured a diverse network at federal, state, and local levels.

With these key allies on board, the VWMP was ready to approach Congress but had one more major hurdle to clear: the Commemorative Works Act requirement to obtain approval from the NPS and CFA. In September 1987, the Secretary of the Interior approved adding a statue at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial site based on the finding that the VWM would be exempt from the Commemorative Works Act as an addition to an existing memorial (Evans, 1993). In October 1987, however,

**Figure 1: Vietnam Women's Memorial Policy Formulation Network, 1984-1988**



the CFA rejected the proposal based largely on testimony opposing the memorial from: Maya Lin, the Wall's designer, who was "concerned about 'individual concessions' to special interest groups;" Frederick Hart, the sculptor of the Three Servicemen; and J. Carter Brown, Chairman of the CFA, who called it "an after-thought, sort of a put-down, almost a ghettoization" (in Evans, 1993, 8).

The VWM network, depicted in Figure 1, was agile in responding to external threats during the policy formulation stage. It harnessed the power of the media to build support for the memorial and to defeat opposition during the CFA hearings. The group actively courted the media, using the nationwide touring exhibit of *The Nurse* and press releases to solicit coverage and support, including *Newsweek* in 1984 and *Military Medicine* in 1985 (Gallagher, 2008). Soon local papers, from the *St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch* to the *Winston-Salem Journal*, were covering the memorial campaign, with it receiving major media attention in the *Village Voice* and *Newsday* in the summer of 1986 (Gallagher, 2008). In the face of strong opposition from the Wall's designer, Maya Lin, and Secretary of the Navy James Webb during the 1987 CFA hearings, a supportive piece on "60 Minutes," watched by several million viewers helped change public opinion (Fischer, 1999). In fact, it was this event that mobilized many latent actors to take action, through letters to the editor, opinion pieces and donations (Gallagher, 2008).

Attempting to override the Commission of Fine Arts' decision, Senators David Durenberger (R-MN) and Alan Cranston, (D-CA) introduced S. 2042 on February 8, 1988 to consider authorizing construction of a statue at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to honor U.S. women who served in the Vietnam War. Sam Gejdenson (D-CT) introduced a companion bill (H.R. 3628) in the House. On February 23, 1988, a hearing was held before the Senate subcommittee on Public Lands, National Parks, and Forests (S. HRG 100-617, 1988).<sup>5</sup> Twenty-three people presented statements at the hearing, including supporting testimony by Senators Durenberger, Cranston, Milkulski (D-MD), and Murkowski (R-AK) (S. HRG 100-617, 1988). Representatives of government agencies testifying in support of S. 2042 included William Mott, Jr., the Director of the National Park Service, and Reginald Griffith, the Executive Director of the National Capital Planning Commission. Representatives from not-for-profit institutions included: E. Phillip Riggins of the American Legion; James Magill of the Veterans of Foreign Wars; Richard Schultz of the Disabled American Veterans; and Mary Stout, President of the Vietnam Veterans of America. Additional testimony was provided by John Wheeler and Robert Doubek of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, LTC (ret.) Evangeline Jemison and Donna-Marie Boulay of the Vietnam Women's Memorial project, as well as two retired officers from the United States Marine Corps, a professor at George Washington University, and a director of a research clinic at George Washington University (CIS 88-S311-60, 1988). Speaking again in opposition to the memorial were the Wall's designer Maya Lin and CFA Chairman J. Carter Brown, who used the authorization of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial, which honors all American women who have served since the Revolutionary War and which the VWMP explicitly supported, to oppose the VWM (S. HRG 100-617, 1988)<sup>6</sup>.

With subcommittee endorsement, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources recommended passage of S. 2042 with amendments in May 1988 (CIS 88-S313-19, 1988). During



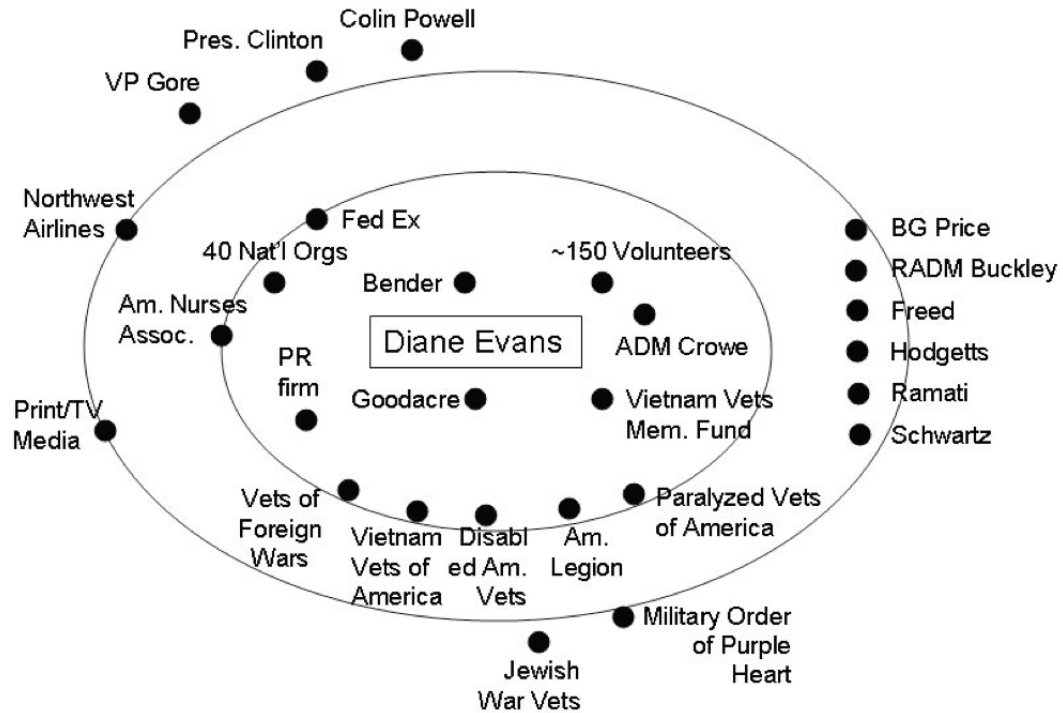
the 1988 hearings, the VWMP strategically moved its headquarters from Minneapolis to Washington D.C., into space donated by the American Nurses Association, to be geographically proximate to the legislative network (Evans, 1993). Additional hearings, debate and bill amendments ensued in the House (CIS 88-H423-3) and again in the Senate. Finally, on November 15, 1988, Public Law 100-660 authorized “the Vietnam Women’s Memorial Project to establish a memorial on Federal land in the District of Columbia or its environs to honor women of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam era” and noted that it was “sense of the Congress... that it would be the most fitting and appropriate to place the memorial within the 2.2 acre site of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial...” (P.L. 100-660, 1988).

Although the memorial itself was authorized, obtaining Congressional authorization of Area I for its site required another effort. Again, the VWM’s strong network was crucial. The VWM board of directors and staff, which had remained largely stable over time, met frequently with members of Congress and committee staff, with Evans herself speaking before committees and testifying at four congressional hearings (Evans, 1993). The VWMP also activated its network of 150 official volunteers, who asked supporters to contact congress members, targeting specific legislators until they co-sponsored the bill (Evans, 1993). The board members and volunteers transmitted information to existing and potential supporters through telephone trees, newsletters of supporting organizations, and media releases; this effective use of technology strengthened their network and attracted allies. Likewise, the network’s strong legal, monetary resources and expertise contributed to its success as an advocacy coalition – the VWMP consulted with a D.C. insider and lobbyist to learn political process, and hired an ad agency to create a promotional poster and petition to send to legislators (Evans, 1993). These efforts culminated in President Bush signing the Area I legislation in November 1989.

With the legislative process finally complete, the network turned its attention to gaining support in the implementation process of design and construction. As Evans noted, “the Project became a strong organization, driven by an effective goal oriented board ...” (1993, 16). Since the CFA had rejected Brodin’s statue of *The Nurse*, they embarked on a design competition in 1990. The inclusion of prominent military members and artists on the jury, including Admiral William J. Crowe (ret.), the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Brigadier General George B. Price (ret.), Rear Admiral Frances Shea Buckley (ret.), architects James Freed and Craig Hodgetts, urban designer Raquel Ramati, and landscape architect Martha Schwartz, expanded the VWM network’s influence (Gamarekian, 1990). Although the collaboration of the top two winners ultimately failed, the honorable mention winner, Glenna Goodacre, was chosen to design the memorial. In a strategic move, the VWMP asked the five major veterans’ organizations that originally supported the effort for their endorsement of the design before approaching the federal agencies (Evans, 1993). This continued involvement of the five veterans’ organizations illustrated the stable membership and relations of the VWM network during the memorial implementation process, depicted in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Vietnam Women's Memorial Implementation Network, 1989-1993**



On the fundraising side, the VWM network solicited donations in newsletters and hired a public relations consultant (Evans, 1993). The media assumed a more peripheral role – it was neither an ally nor an antagonist (Evans, 1993). The VWMP included Fred Smith, Vietnam Veteran and president of Federal Express, who donated transportation of the statue on its nationwide tour before its dedication (Fischer, 1999). General Colin Powell spoke at the VWM's groundbreaking ceremony on July 29, 1993, while its November 11, 1993 dedication featured presentations by President Clinton, Vice President Gore, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. William Crowe and Jan Scruggs of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Fund (Fischer, 1999). Today, the memorial is a powerful addition to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial precinct and has been the site of numerous Memorial Day and Veterans' Day storytelling ceremonies since its dedication. In addition, the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation is preparing for the 15th Anniversary of the VWM's dedication (Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation website, 2008).

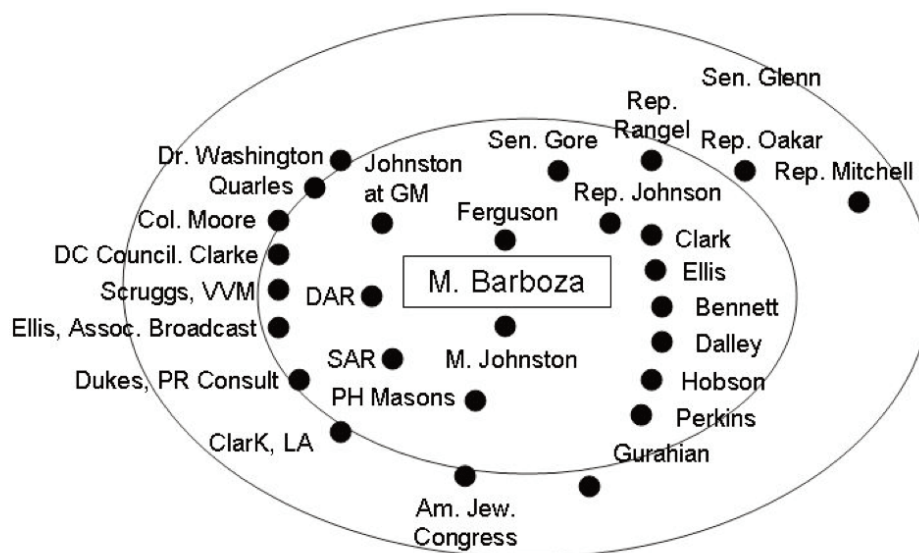
### **Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial**

Like the VWM, the story of the Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial (BRWPM) began with one person's vision. Maurice Barboza, frustrated by his aunt Lena Ferguson's lengthy struggle to be admitted into the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), scheduled a meeting with Representative Nancy L. Johnson (R-CT) who represented his hometown (Barboza, 1988). Representative Johnson was fascinated by Ferguson's story and agreed to place a statement honoring Ferguson's and Barboza's family into the Congressional Record. She later introduced legislation

to honor the service of more than 5,000 black men in the American Revolution, which passed Congress unanimously and was signed into law by President Reagan in March 1984 (Public Law 98-245). Building on this momentum, Ferguson, Barboza, and Margaret Johnston founded “The Black Revolutionary War Patriots (BRWP) Foundation,” originally called the “Black Patriots of 1776,” in February 1985 to raise funds to build a national memorial to black soldiers and freedom seekers of the American Revolution. Barboza asked Representative Johnson to sponsor a bill to establish such a memorial, which was introduced in the House on February 7, 1985 with Chuck Rangel (D-NY) as co-sponsor. Twenty-four witnesses provided supporting testimony at the June 13 hearing, timed to commemorate Juneteenth, the day slaves in Texas were freed. Senator Albert Gore, Jr. (D-TN) became the Senate champion, introducing the bill with twenty co-sponsors in May of that year (S. HRG 99-424).

According to Senate Hearing 99-424 (1985), the BRWPM Foundation’s board of directors during the 1985 authorization hearings included Barboza, Ferguson, and Johnston, as well as: Richard W. Clark; Ernie Ellis; Maybelle Taylor Bennett of the Howard University Community Association; George Dalley, an assistant to Representative Charles B. Rangel; Robert Hobson; Donald Perkins; and Jennifer Gurahian, a history professor at Westchester Community College.<sup>7</sup> The National Advisory Council included members of the business, academic, veterans, government, and artist communities. James Johnston, Vice President at General Motors, represented business interests, and Dr. Bennette Washington and Historian Benjamin Quarles represented academia. Sarah King, president of the DAR, and Carl F. Bessent, Past President of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), served on the committee, as did Col (Ret.) Talmadge Lee Moore and Jan Scruggs, founder of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (S. HRG 99-424, 1985). Rounding out the Council were: DC City Council Chairman David A. Clarke; Dwight Ellis, Vice President at the National Associ-

**Figure 3: Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial Policy Formulation Network, 1984-1988**



ation of Broadcasters; Public Relations Consultant Ofield Dukes; and Landscape Architect Arthur H. Clark (S. HRG 99-424, 1985).

These diverse core members of the network, depicted in Figure 3, successfully influenced a distinguished group of legislative leaders to testify on the BRWPM's behalf at the October 29, 1985 Senate subcommittee of Public Lands, Reserved Water and Resource Conservation<sup>5</sup> hearing on S.J. Resolution 143, which proposed "to authorize the BRWP Foundation to establish a memorial in [D.C.] at an appropriate site in Constitution Gardens" (S. HRG 99-424). In addition to Barboza, testifying in support were Representative Johnson (with Representative Rangel supporting), Representative Mary Rose Oakar (with Senator John Glenn supporting), and Senator Gore, as well as Charles Bates, a leader of the Prince Hall Masons of D.C., Sarah King, the President of the DAR, and Robert Weinberg, co-chairman of the National Capital Region Commission on Law and Social Action of the American Jewish Congress (S. HRG 99-424). The Deputy Director of the NPS testified that the Resolution should be deferred to allow consultation with NCMAC and that the site-specific language should be removed, noting the in-progress Commemorative Works Act legislation (S. HRG 99-424). Although Congressman Parren Mitchell (D-MD) and others sought an exemption, the Commemorative Works Act was passed without a specific exemption for the BRWPM (Barboza, 1988). In November 1985, Barboza testified before the Commission on companion H.J. Res. 142. Ultimately, Congress authorized the memorial and, on October 26, 1986, President Ronald Regan signed Public Law 98-245, authorizing the construction of the BRWPM.

Like the VWM, the BRWPM Foundation wanted a site in Area I, which required the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission, National Capital Planning Commission, Commission of Fine Arts, and the National Park Service to designate the history honored by the memorial to be of "preeminent historical and lasting significance to the nation" (P.L. 107-217, 2002). On February 12, 1987 and April 23, 1987, Barboza testified before the NCMAC regarding a site on the Mall (Barboza, 2006). In November 1987, the Secretary of the Interior's recommendation of a Mall site went to Congress. After NCMAC consideration and Senate and House hearings, the BRWPM secured the specific site at Constitution Gardens on March 25, 1988 (PL 100-265). Just before the authorization, Mayor Barthelemy of New Orleans, Louisiana, along with mayors Richard Berkley of Kansas City, Missouri and Harvey Gantt of Charlotte, North Carolina, all of the National Conference of Mayors, introduced a resolution endorsing the memorial site and "urg[ing] Mayors throughout the nation to lead or coordinate, or otherwise advance, efforts in their respective communities to raise funds for the Black Patriots memorial" (Barboza, 1991). According to the rules of Commemorative Works Act, the organization had five years to raise the money from private sources; otherwise they would forfeit entitlement to the land.

Although the BRWPM received Area I legislative authorization more than a full year before the VWM, the BRWPM remains un-built. This delay can be attributed to the unraveling, or fragmentation, of the BRWPM network during the administrative, implementation phase of the project. Although the design concept was approved by the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission, the National Capital Planning Commission, and the Commission of Fine Arts after

rounds of hearings in 1990 and 1992 (Barboza, 2006), poor fundraising led to four separate requests for reauthorization.

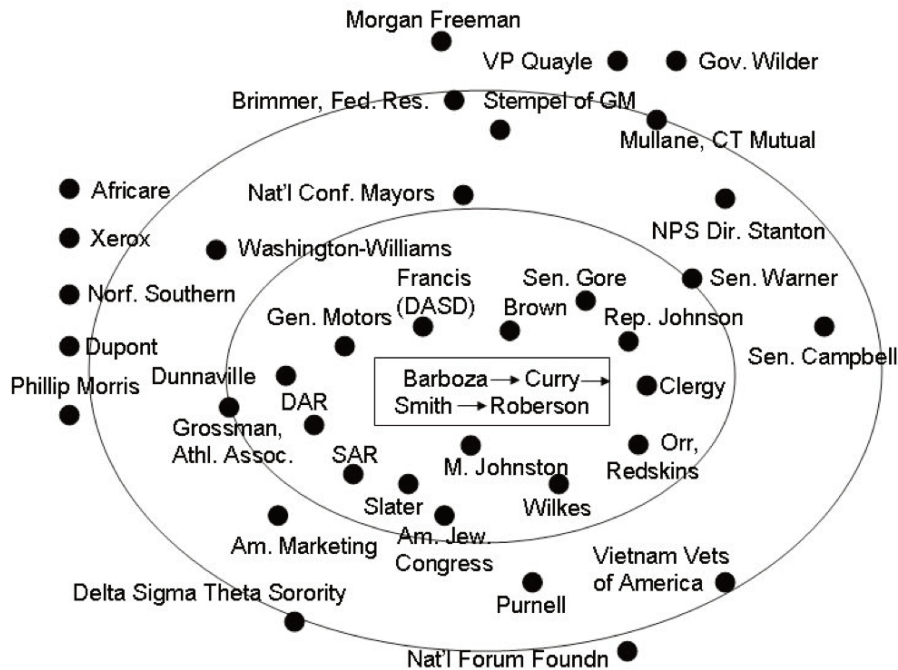
In 1991, the BRWPM embarked on a “One Nation Campaign” to raise money, chaired by former federal reserve board member Andrew Brimmer and General Motors chairman Robert Stempel, with honorary chairmen Vice President Quayle, Virginia Governor Douglas Wilder and actor Morgan Freeman (Barboza, 1991). In June of 1991, Barboza appealed to the National Conference of Mayors, who had supported them during the Area I legislative process, to urge them to begin the “One Nation Campaign” in their cities on July 4th and conclude by the October fundraising deadline. Despite these distinguished chairmen and potential powerful fundraising strategy, the campaign did not meet the goal and the BRWP Foundation again sought to extend the authority past 1993.

The implementation effort was derailed when Maurice Barboza was fired as president of the Foundation in 1992 because the foundation was displeased with his performance (Abelson, 2000) and he and Lena Ferguson completely departed the project in 1994 (Barboza, 2004a). According to Barboza (2004a), “...everything had been accomplished except the final funding. There was a coveted site reserved on the Mall, near the Washington Monument. ... There was seed money in the bank and a cadre of national supporters. But friendship turned to spite – cooperation to chaos. Yada, yada, yada, I was, as a Washington Times headline phrased it, ‘dumped.’ Me, my dream, and all the goodwill that Lena and I had worked to build for the black patriots was washed away by vanity” (11). The composition of the 1994 BRWPM team was almost entirely different than the 1985 team; in addition to D.C. Community leader Margaret Johnston, members included: Foundation President General Curry; Vice President and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense H. Minton Francis; Terry Orr of the Washington Redskins; C. Christopher Dunnaville, Vice President of Smith Barney; architect Marshall Purnell; and Jim Grossman of the Athletic Players Association (S. HRG 103-572, 1994). General Motors continued to be an important ally of the memorial, underwriting its administrative costs and donating \$1.5 million in 1996 (Abelson, 2000), and the Foundation hired American Marketing and Events to conduct a professional fundraising effort (S. HRG 103-572, 1994). Andrew Brimmer continued to be involved with the national fundraising campaign, and was joined by Denis Mullane, President of Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company (S. HRG 103-572, 1994). The changes in the BRWPM network during the memorial implementation stage are depicted in Figure 4.

Despite the internal shakeup of the organization, in November 1993, the House Committee on Natural Resources recommended passage of House Resolution (H.R.) 2947 to amend the Commemorative Works Act to extend authority for the BRWP Memorial, as well as the Women in Military Service for America Memorial, and the National Peace Garden. On February 10, 1994, a hearing before the Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands, National Parks and Forests<sup>5</sup> was convened to extend the BRWP Memorial’s authorization for two more years (S. 1552) as part of the Reauthorization of Certain Commemorative Works (Public Law 103-321, 1994). Senator John Warner (R-VA) introduced the bill with Representative Johnson providing lead testimony and giving credit to the original Senate sponsor during the 1985 hearings, Senator Gore.



**Figure 4: Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial Implementation Network, 1988-2005**



Major General Jerry Curry, the President of the BRWP Foundation, as well as Regional NPS Director Robert Stanton and Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell (D-CO), provided support for the memorial (S. HRG 103-572, 1994). Despite the lack of fundraising and inability to appeal to a mass public audience, which the Foundation's speakers attributed to the economic recession, the lack of a professional fundraiser, and that "the national television attention was drawn almost exclusively to the Presidential election, and there was a resultant dampening effect on potential donor's enthusiasms" (Curry in S. HRG 103-572, 1994), authority was extended until October 27, 1996.

Faced with the next expiration of legislative authority in 1996, the BRWPM Foundation received approval for a commemorative coin to raise funds (Public Law 104-329). Even with this legislative boost, the coin raised only \$1 million of the projected \$5 million (Abelson, 2000) and the BRWPM was granted another extension on November 2, 1998 (Public Law 105-345). Despite losing major supporters like Philip Morris and Dupont, who contributed \$50,000 each in 1992, the BRWPM leaders remained "...overly optimistic about their ability to raise money, all of which must come from private sources" (Abelson, 2000, 1). Specifically, they overestimated their support in 1996 by claiming that they had raised \$3.7 million but had included outstanding promises like San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown's pledge to raise \$1 million (Abelson, 2000). As of 2000, the foundation had raised \$3.6 million but had spent 2.6 million, of which only \$800,000 was on the memorial development itself (Abelson, 2000). To reinvigorate the campaign, the foundation under President Wayne F. Smith restructured its Board of Directors to include members of the black clergy with the goal of gaining support of their congregations (Abelson, 2000). According

to Foundation co-chairman Robert J. Brown, “I have faith if we work hard enough and redouble our efforts to get the right kind of people involved, we can raise this money overnight....we're not talking a lot of money” (in Abelson, 2000, 1). Again, despite the Foundation being \$7 million short of the \$8 million required to construct the memorial<sup>8</sup> (Abelson, 2000), on November 6, 2000, P.L. 106-442 extended the BRWPM foundation’s legislative authority to 2005.

During the 1996 and 2000 reauthorizations, the ousted Barboza assisted with fundraising and authority extension but distanced himself from the original network. In September 2000, Barboza appeared before the NCMAC to oppose reauthorization of the previous sponsor, noting that “the [BRWPM] group did not appreciate accountability – nor did it have the support base, the design, the message, or the imagination to succeed” (Barboza, 2006, 2). Facing continued fundraising shortages for the memorial, Barboza turned to the power of the media: in 2004, he wrote an editorial in the Washington Post appealing for creation of a presidential-appointed commission to assist with fundraising (Barboza, 2004b). The BRWPM received a publicity boost from the involvement of Essie Mae Washington-Williams, the daughter of late Senator Strom Thurmond, who agreed to help raise the more than \$12 million dollars needed for construction (Barboza, 2004b), but was unsuccessful.

With the authorization was set to expire again in October 2005, two competing approaches were taken. The BRWPM Foundation, under President Rhonda Roberson, former Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater, and Sybil Wilkes, co-host of a famous radio show (Cottman, 2005), sought legislation to grandfather in the original memorial (Dvorak, 2005). Barboza formed the National Mall Liberty Fund D.C. in May 2005 and sought a sponsor of a bill to “assign the Liberty Fund D.C. rights to land authorized by Congress in 1988 as the site of a future memorial to African American patriots of the Revolutionary war. The former sponsor...failed to fulfill the requirements of the Commemorative Works Act by October 27, 2005, when that law terminated their claim to the site. When approved, Liberty Fund D.C. will be able to renew the cause and design, construct and dedicate the memorial” (Questions and Answers, 2006, 1). However, Barboza’s attempts to seek a sponsor were derailed when Hurricane Katrina placed the issue to the back of the congressional agenda (Dvorak, 2005) and the network was unable to overcome this external factor until more than six months later.

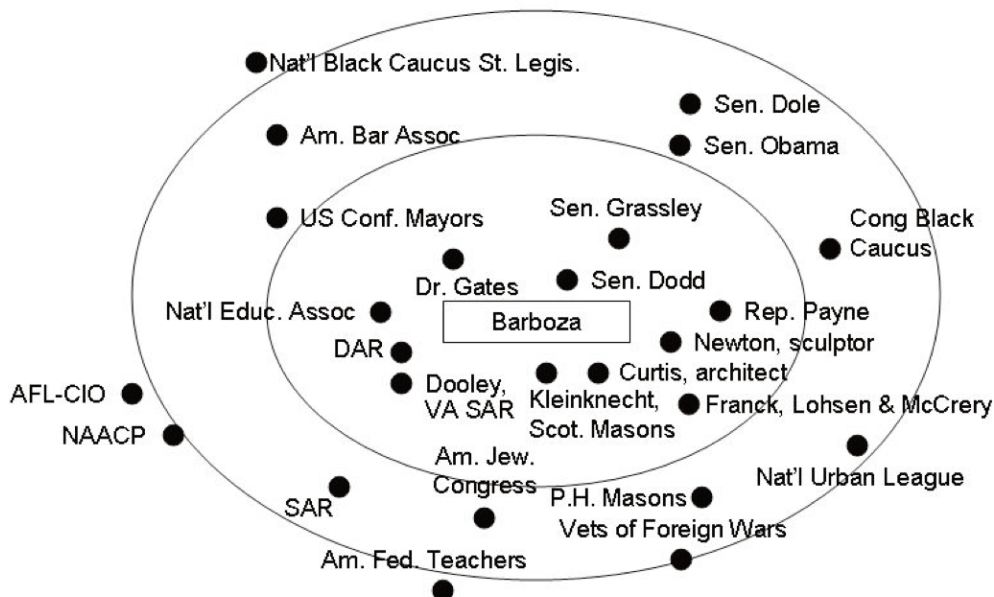
In April 2006, Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT) introduced S. 2495, the “National Liberty Memorial Act.” Co-sponsors included Charles Grassley (R-IA), who co-sponsored the original 1986 legislation, Elizabeth Dole (R-NC), Barack Obama (D-IL), Robert Byrd (D-WV), Lincoln Chafee (R-RI), and George Allen (R-VA). Barboza stated that they would embark on a new design, with the goal of dedicating the National Liberty Memorial (NLM) on July 4, 2010 (Questions, 2006). The bill foundered in the 109th Congress but was resurrected in March 2007, when Sponsor Dodd and co-sponsors Grassley, Dole, and Obama introduced S. 1051 “National Liberty Memorial Act,” which read: “A bill to authorize the National Mall Liberty Fund D.C. to establish a memorial on Federal land in the District of Columbia at Constitution Gardens previously approved to honor free persons and slaves who fought for independence, liberty, and justice for all during the American Revolution.”



The companion bill, H.R. 1693, introduced by Representative Donald M. Payne (D-NJ), was co-sponsored by 55 members, including the entire Congressional Black Caucus. Barboza testified before the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands on March 6, 2008 (NLMF website). The reauthorization never became law under the 110th Congress.

Aside from Barboza, the 2008 composition of Board of Directors of the National Liberty Memorial fund, as well as much of its corporate support, is entirely different than the 1985 and 1994 versions of the BRWPM organization, although many organizations have transferred their support from the BRWPM to the NLM. The NLM network is depicted in Figure 5. The Board includes: Washington D.C. sculptor David Newton; architects Michael Curtis and Franck, Lohsen and McCrery Architects; C. Fred Kleinknecht, the former Grand Commander of the Scottish Rite Masons; Joseph W. Dooley, the Vice President of the Virginia Society of the Sons of the American Revolution; and Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., a renowned professor at Harvard University (NMLF website, 2008). Likewise, broad corporate support has waned. From 1991 to 2008, Africare, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Vietnam Veterans of America, Xerox, Norfolk Southern, and the National Forum Foundation appear to have ceased their formal support of the memorial.<sup>9</sup> However, the Daughters of the American Revolution, Sons of the American Revolution, American Jewish Congress, Prince Hall Masons, U.S. Conference of Mayors, American Federal of State, County and Municipal Employees, National Urban League, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, AFL-CIO, National Black Caucus of State Legislators, National Education Association, American Bar Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the American Federation of Teachers have provided varying degrees of support for much of the past twenty years (NMLF website, 2008; "Questions and Answers", 2006).

**Figure 5: National Liberty Memorial (formerly the Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial) Implementation Network, 2005-2008**



## Conclusion

Although the BRWPM had stronger, consistent legislative support than the VWM experienced, the VWM was better able to navigate the implementation phase of the process. Was the BRWPM at an inherent disadvantage in the implementation phase of design and fundraising because the event it commemorates is earlier in American history, with no living survivors to carry on the memory and fewer people who can trace their ancestry to participants, thereby offering a smaller constituency of supporters and donors? Are people less likely to support a memorial to black patriots than a memorial to women nurses? These factors certainly may have influenced the process and are worth exploring,<sup>10</sup> but are not the focus of this analysis. The VWMP's success in navigating the design and fundraising phase can be attributed to its cohesive, interconnected network and strong core leadership. Evans remained at the core of the network throughout the entire campaign despite receiving threats and being accused of exploiting the dead to further her own interests (Evans, 1993). After mobilizing the five major veteran's organizations in 1985, Evans stayed involved and visible with them throughout the process, activities that built trust. This enabled her to approach them again in 1988 to testify in support of S. 2042 and, again, in 1990 for endorsement of Goodacre's design during the implementation phase. The VWM network successfully obtained support of groups who could have voiced opposition, such as members of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Project, and utilized the media to build broad public support. While the VWMP strategically integrated academics and businesses, the veterans groups comprised the majority of the network's active organizations.

On the other hand, the BRWPM has not remained a closely knit, integrated organization. Although Barboza was the heart and driving force of the organization until 1992, testifying before Congress, the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission, the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts a total of twenty times (Barboza, 2006), his departure caused the organization to lose its focus. Even before then, the BRWPM foundation tried to incorporate too wide of a range of members - academics, professional athletes, artists, and veterans groups - into its inner network. This lack of similar associations likely resulted in divergent interests, lack of empathy for each other and the cause, and different visions for the memorial itself. After Barboza left the BRWPM and founded the new NLM organization, he noted that "the [BRWPM] group had at least five presidents and dozens of board members over 14 years. Even the hangers-on after 1992 when I departed had no concept of what I, and a coalition of nearly 20 organizations, did to obtain the site" (Barboza, 2006).

The close-knit VWM network, comprised mostly of nurses and other veterans, was also resilient in deflecting internal challenges and keeping their base of support. In May 1988, the VWMP fired Donna-Marie Boulay amidst allegations of excessive spending of corporate funds, unapproved endorsement of the "China Beach" television show, and copyright neglect that resulted in Brodin's suit against Stuart Pharmaceuticals, the project's primary corporate sponsor (Cuniberti, 1989). Despite this shake-up, Evans and the other members maintained their ties to each other and the goal. In 1992, the BRWPM Foundation ousted Barboza, who then formed the NLM

Foundation which, for a while, competed with the BRWPM Foundation to build the memorial. Whereas the VWM network broadened during the legislative, or policy formulation, phase to include all women who served in any capacity in Vietnam, the BRWPM's implementation phase saw the competition of two organizations, then eventual transition to the NLM. The VWM's move was early enough in the process that they remained integrated and did not jeopardize their name recognition; the change also successfully broadened their cause and increased the reach of their network. However, the BRWPM's change fragmented the organization and decreased name recognition, which diluted the clarity of the memorial's message and their fundraising efforts.

The VWMP's success can also be attributed to their transformation from an issue network to an advocacy coalition during the implementation phase. They strategically mobilized peripheral and latent actors through media appeals. They achieved their goals because they relied on the expertise and the number of members, they were able to affect public opinion, successfully utilized technology, and weathered the changes in administration and national economic fluctuations. Building a network of volunteers and empowering some of them to speak officially for the organization was a key move that strengthened the network and facilitated acquisition of allies. Conversely, the BRWPM failed to deliver its message to a wide, powerful audience during the implementation phase. According to Karen Hastie Williams, who was involved in the project in its early stages, "It's really been a problem of not communicating terribly effectively about the memorial," (in Abelson, 2000, 1). The BRWPM network attributed their failure to mobilize resources to the economic recession, lack of a professional fundraiser, and competing media attention given to the Presidential election. Although various federal agencies have supported the BRWPM project since its initiation, the NLM runs the risk of alienating some of the original supporters through its vocal denouncement of the BRWPM foundation on its website and in its leader's speeches, such as his 2000 testimony that the "[BRWPM] group did not appreciate accountability – nor did it have the support base, the design, the message, or the imagination to succeed". The NLM network's tactic of asking children to assist with advocacy and fundraising (NLMF DC website, 2008) also hinders the building of a powerful an advocacy coalition.

This case study sheds light on the process through which memorials are erected on the National Mall. Placing a monument in a public space is an overtly public act, all the more so when that public space is arguably the most visible public space in our nation. Our case study reveals that the networks in place in these examples are inherently human structures, subject to the foibles of leadership and the whims of human relationships. While the inherent value of a monument project may be clear, its success ultimately depends on the ability of motivated people to navigate successfully through a maze of human relationships even more than on the relative merit of the monument's honorees.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> House Committee on House Administration and Senate Committee on Energy and Natural resources at the time of the VWM's and BRWPM's authorization.

<sup>2</sup> The Commemorative Zone Policy, adopted in 2000, designated the *Reserve*, or the central cross-axis of the Mall where no new memorials should be built; *Area I* (roughly the Mall, White House Grounds, and Arlington Cemetery, and their environs), designated for commemorative works of preeminent historic and national significance; and *Area II*, the remainder of the city, where development of new memorials and museums should be encouraged. Reference: <http://www.ncpc.gov/initiatives/pg.asp?p=memorialsandmuseums>

<sup>3</sup> The sponsor works with either NPS or GSA, depending on whose land is involved. NPS will be used in this paper to reflect the situation of the VWM and the NLM.

<sup>4</sup> Memorials with strong political support can receive money from the federal government but most must be financed exclusive through private sources (Abelson, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate

<sup>6</sup> WIMSA was passed into law in November 1986. (Public Law 99-610).

<sup>7</sup> Affiliations determined by cross-referencing using Google web searches.

<sup>8</sup> Not including approximately \$2 million to be set aside for maintenance and program costs.

<sup>9</sup> Comparison from Barboza, 1991, to 2008 NLMF D.C. website.

<sup>10</sup> We thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

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# Mommy-Nanny as Principal-Agent in *The Nanny Diaries*<sup>1</sup>

Robert Maranto and April Gresham Maranto

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## Part 1: Introduction

Imported from economics, social scientists have used principal agency theory through 1980s and 1990s to explore such diverse matters as how managers attempt to keep their presumably lazy employees from shirking, how stockholders might keep company managers from mismanaging for their own benefit (a particularly timely topic now), how voters hold elected politicians accountable, and most notably, relations between political leaders and their agents, career bureaucrats. As Charles Perrow (1987, 224) writes, agency theory simplistically assumes that social life is a series of contracts:

Conventionally, one member, the “buyer” of the goods or services, is designated the “principal,” and the other, who provides the goods or service, is the “agent,”—hence the term “agency theory.” The principal-agent relationship is governed by a contract specifying what the agent should do and what the principal must do in return.

Traditional agency theory portrays agents as motivated by laziness to shirk. They have some ability to do so due to *information asymmetries: Agents know more about their work than their principals do.*<sup>2</sup> Below we will expand upon this common understanding to show that information asymmetry can actually work both ways. According to traditional agency theory, principals respond to information asymmetries by creating increasingly detailed and *unambiguous contracts*, by monitoring their agents, by having other agents monitor them, and by incentivizing agents to maximize the goals of the principal. Principals *monitor* agents to ensure compliance with their goals through such means as *paperwork, increasingly detailed orders, surprise inspections, and compliance reports by third parties*. In the business world, agents who fail to serve their principals, if discovered during monitoring, can be replaced by other agents, though for tenured civil servants this is more problematic (Downs, 1967; Maranto, 2005; Moe 1984; Miller 1992; Williamson 1983).

Inevitably, principal control is limited, and stressing control can be counterproductive. Even before the spread of agency theory as such, Anthony Downs (1967) proposed “the law of counter control” in which the greater the effort by a superior to control a subordinate, the greater the effort of that subordinate to evade said control, leading the agent to eventually focus only on their own security and convenience. Superiors then respond with additional orders, leading to a “control cycle.” We will further explore this cycle by examining a psychological motivation—scapegoating—that would motivate principals to increase agent harassment and conflict. *Scapegoating is the psychological process by which a person displaces an unacceptable negative feeling toward a powerful target onto a lower status, less powerful person*, in this case the agent. Eventually too many orders and rules, negative evaluations, and possibly even harassment, harm employee/agent morale and sap organizational effectiveness (Downs 1967; Anechiarico and Jacobs 1996; Kelman 2005). In addition, we will show that principals can also withhold information in order to control or exploit their employees, increasing the likelihood of *agent alienation, defined here as increasing agent conflict with and distrust of the principal*.

Applied to public administration, agency theory again sees employment relationships as pitting principals, usually political executives or members of Congress, against career bureaucrats. Public sector principal-agent relationships are more complicated than in the private sector, in part because bureaucrat-agents may genuinely not know who their true principal is due to the separation of powers. Secondly, it is often difficult to measure (and thus monitor) the performance of government bureaucrats. In business everyone agrees that profit is the preeminent (and measurable) goal, but government outputs are more difficult to measure. Finally, because of bureaucratic personnel policies, principals cannot normally fire agents in the civil service, nor do they have much control over subordinates’ pay or working conditions (Downs, 1967; Moe 1984; Johnson and Libecap 1994; Berman et al 2001).

In a sophisticated critique of agency theory aptly titled *Working, Shirking, and Sabotage*, Brehm and Gates (1997) point out that since agents in government often care about public policy, they may actually “sabotage” principal’s goals, not out of laziness but for idealistic motives: They disagree with their principal(s). As one very conservative Reagan administration political appointee described his agency:

Five to ten percent of the civil service supported us, but it took a little while to find them. On the other hand, five to ten percent were absolutely opposed to us, and it took us a little while to scatter them.

In his view, most bureaucrats did not care at all about their work and could be left alone; ironically, lazy bureaucrats are less damaging to the principal’s goals than more dedicated oppositional bureaucrats (Maranto 1989, 192). Furthermore, sabotaging agents may be particularly difficult to control since in most bureaucracies, civil servants care more about how their *peers* view them than how principals see them. Indeed, such normative constructs as the politics-administration dichotomy and

traditions of civilian control of the military were set up in part to counter such tendencies: to keep bureaucrats from loving their programs too much (Garvey 1993).<sup>3</sup>

## **Part 2: Applying Agency Theory to Child Care**

Child-raising offers interesting applications of principal-agent theory. Increased labor participation by women and breakdown of extended families (with grandparents or others raising children) means that large numbers of parents entrust large segments of their children's time to paid agents, either day-care or nannies. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, some 6.2 million women worked full-time yet had at least one child under six in the household in 2001, while 10.7 million full-time working women had children between 6 and 17 (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2002-3). Similarly, Peth-Pierce (1997) reports that in 1980 "38% of mothers, ages 18-44, with infants under one year of age, worked outside the home. By 1990, this percentage climbed to 50, a rate close to where it stands now. Most of these women return to work in their child's first three to five months." This trend has continued since, and the number of children under 5 years of age is predicted to gradually increase between 2000 and 2010 (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2002-3).

Child-care services, just like food services, are changing to meet the needs of families where the mother or father has little time or inclination to do traditional homemaker duties such as preparing home-cooked meals and caring for the children. As a result, the childcare industry will need an additional 164,000 workers between 1996 and 2006 (Herman, 2000). Notably, more nannies are imported from poor nations, particularly the Philippines, leading some critics to fear a "care drain" in which Filipinas are forced by economic necessity to emigrate to care for the children of wealthy nations, leaving their own children behind and without emotional support (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Rowe 2003).

## **Part 3: Principal Agent Theory and Nannies**

### ***The Ambiguity of the Nanny Job***

*The Nanny Diaries* offers a unique application of principal-agent theory, chiefly from the agent's perspective rather than the principal's. While the relationship between the mommy-principal and nanny-agent is governed by a contract, the goals of the two may clash, particularly because of the ambiguity of the principal's goals for and instructions to the agent. Usually, agency theory focuses upon the agent's exploitation of *contract ambiguity*. However, this case study shows that ambiguity can work both ways: In *The Nanny Diaries* the principal's ambiguity and the contract's ambiguity allows her to exploit the lower status agent. *Asymmetry of information* can also work both ways. Agency theory typically shows agents using their greater knowledge to thwart their principal's goals, but this book offers examples of how a principal can withhold key knowledge from an agent, leading to increased conflict and *agent alienation*.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the principal may lack key knowledge which the nanny-agent holds, leading the principal to seek this information by *monitoring the agent* in increasingly obtrusive ways, from increased paperwork to surveillance.

Finally, the ambiguity of the nanny's own role and the distance between her goals and each family member's goals leads to both *role ambiguity* and eventual *role conflict*.

Few statistics exist about nannies, whose job is defined by the Department of Labor as a subset of childcare workers who "generally take care of children from birth to age 10 or 12, tending to the child's early education, nutrition, health, and other needs. They also may perform the duties of a general housekeeper, including general cleaning and laundry duties" (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2002-03). Given the notably indefinite official definition of the nanny job, it is easy to understand how the agent-nanny's goals could be as ambiguous as any of Brehm and Gates' governmental workers.

## **Part 4: Case Study: Illustrating Agency Theory Through Nanny Diaries**

### **About the Book**

*The Nanny Diaries* was on the *New York Times* Paperback Top Ten List for four weeks by April 27, 2002, and on the hardcover list for 31 weeks by October 20, 2002 (New York Entertainment, 2004)<sup>5</sup>. Clearly, this darkly comic bestseller captured the nation's interest in the child-care issue. Amazon.com called it "an absolutely addictive peek into the utterly weird world of child rearing in the upper reaches of Manhattan's social strata." *Publisher's Weekly* notes that this fact-based novel "pulls no punches... [and is] required reading for parents and the women they hire to do their parenting..." [http://www.reviewsofbooks.com/nanny\\_diaries/](http://www.reviewsofbooks.com/nanny_diaries/) (accessed April 22, 2006).

### **Mother-Principal, Nanny-Agents, and Conflict**

Based in part on the real-life experiences of former New York nannies Emma McLaughlin and Nicola Kraus, *The Nanny Diaries* explores the triangular world of the eponymous Nanny, child Grayer, and socialite mother Mrs. X during a nine-month period starting with the verbal dance of the interview and ending with Nanny's dismissal.<sup>6</sup>

While the dysfunctionality of the X family's life hopefully does not reflect typical government-agent interactions, the novel is still a useful illustration of several facets of principal-agent theory. Mrs. X is an alternatively vindictive, uncaring, and pathetic mommy-principal, while Nanny, the heroine of the novel, is an agent who tries to do the right thing for her charge, four-year old Grayer, but who cannot give him what he most needs: A loving, caring family who will spend time with him. Mr. X, Mrs. X's unfaithful husband and Grayer's uncaring father, pays Nanny's bills but otherwise ignores her and his child.

In a way, Nanny comes to focus upon Grayer—who seems a normal four-year old boy except for his understandable insecurity<sup>7</sup>—as her principal, and gives her loyalty and devotion to him rather than the incompetent authority Mrs. X or the man who writes her checks—Mr. X. Just as a bureaucrat more devoted to their program than to legitimate directives from their agency chief may sabotage those directives he or she disagrees with, Nanny sabotages Mrs. X's goals and is eventually fired. Further, as

detailed below, the directives of the principal may not be feasible, another frequent complaint bureaucrats have about their agency chiefs (Maranto, 1993; Ingersoll, 2003). This paper will explore key aspects of agency theory, such contract ambiguity, information asymmetries, principal-agent conflict, agent alienation, agent monitoring, role ambiguity and role conflict. We will also employ a psychological concept, scapegoating, to make sense of this fundamentally economic approach.

### **Contract Ambiguity**

A key point in principal-agent theory is the contract, the document spelling out the obligations and rights of both the agent and the principal. This specifying of the agent's job is supposed to limit the ambiguity which could allow shirking or sabotage. However, contracts are imperfect. The initial confusion over contractual obligations appears in the first part of the book during Nanny's interview, and continues to plague her throughout. As she describes:

[t]here are essentially three types of nanny gigs. Type A, I provide "couple time" a few nights a week for people who work all day and parent most nights. Type B, I provide "sanity time" a few afternoons a week to a woman who mothers most days and nights. Type C, I'm brought in as one of a cast of many to collectively provide twenty-four/seven "me time" to a woman who neither works nor mothers. And her days remain a mystery to us all (McLaughlin & Kraus, p. 26).

Mrs. X is a Type C principal, herself unclear about her own multiple roles (that of mother coming far behind husband's social organizer and display model); she is thus unlikely to create a clear contract.<sup>8</sup>

Naturally, adequate appraisal of personnel depends upon having a limited and coherent position description, with duties clearly spelled out in the contract (Berman et al 2001). Yet Nanny's job is wholly ambiguous, ranging from the standard child-care interaction such as picking Grayer up from school and playing with him to more demanding and less appropriate jobs such as nursing Grayer through a 104 degree fever (while Mrs. X goes to a spa) and buying lavender water at a boutique for the housekeeper to use in ironing the tablecloth for Mrs. X's big party. Such ambiguity ensures that both agent and principal (Nanny and Mrs. X) will feel exploited and cheated by the other.

Upon meeting Grayer's father, Mr. X., for the first time, Nanny (McLaughlin & Kraus, p. 72) realizes that he has nothing to say to one "[whose] domain ...alternates between middle management and cleaning staff." Just as Jane Eyre's and other 19th century governess positions fell between that of servant and family (Poole, 1993), so does the modern day nanny's role. Additionally, Nanny's time commitment is assumed to be highly flexible and at the whim of Mrs. X, the mommy-principal. Initially hired part-time, Mrs. X gradually increases her demand for Nanny's services until the agent ends up working three times her initial hours. Indeed Nanny is eventually fired when she refuses to miss her college graduation to accompany the X family on a holiday trip. Nanny's experience with an ambiguous contract leading to long hours is akin to that of many agents (and their principals) in government (Maranto 1993, 2005).<sup>9</sup>



### ***Information Asymmetries Harming the Agent***

The information asymmetries so prevalent in bureaucratic applications of principal-agent theory occur throughout *The Nanny Diaries*, and go both ways, just as in government (Maranto 1993). A key theme is that the principal, Mrs. X, does not give Nanny enough information to do parts of her job:

Mrs. X. starts ringing constantly with new requests for the dinner party. In rapid succession, I buy the wrong-colored gift bags for the presents, the wrong ribbon to tie the bags closed, and the wrong shade of lilac tissue paper to stuff them with. Then, in a stunning crescendo, I buy the wrong-sized place cards (McLaughlin & Kraus pp. 54-55).

Nanny finds these details continuously annoying, but relatively trivial, since she sees her primary job as taking care of Grayer rather than running errands for his mother. However, Mrs. X also does not give Nanny enough information to do this part of the job properly either. In one instance, Nanny goes to school to pick up Grayer only to find out that a) he hasn't been in school that day and b) he has a playdate scheduled with a schoolmate about which she knew nothing. When she comes to the X's apartment, she finally gets the crucial information from the housekeeper that Mr. and Mrs. X have had a fight and thus nobody took Grayer to school. In another instance, she is told only that Grayer had a playdate with "Alex," but when she tries to ask Mrs. X which of the four Alexanders and three Alexandras in his class he is supposed to play with, Mrs. X pulls away in her limo before she can ask the question. These examples illustrate the damage of information asymmetry harming the agent with unequal access to key information.

### ***Principal-Agent Conflict and Agent Alienation***

Nanny cynically observes that the whole purpose of her job is to be close to the child, enabling the mother to keep her distance. Nanny's expertise is based on two facts: she is more expert at general child raising and she spends a lot of time interacting with and paying attention to Grayer. A child development major doing her senior thesis at NYU, Nanny has done several other nanny-ing jobs the last four years to pay her way through college and afford a New York City apartment. Nanny's closeness to and empathy for the child means that this agent understands a great deal more about Grayer's motivations and needs than his mother and father do.

A typical case in point is when Nanny disparages Mrs. X's way of leaving Grayer, a scene that occurs repeatedly throughout the novel. "Her departure is like the suicide drills from gym class—every time she gets just a few feet farther away, Grayer cries and she scurries back, admonishing, 'Now, let's be a big boy.' Only once Grayer is in complete hysterics does she look at her watch and with a 'Now Mommy's going to be late' is gone" (McLaughlin & Kraus, p.31). As attachment theory predicts (e.g., Bowlby, 1951) and as anyone who has been around children knows, this is a recipe for what absolutely *not* to do when leaving a child.

In principal-agent theory, the agent typically uses such information asymmetries to shirk work,

necessitating monitoring by the principal or by other agents. In *The Nanny Diaries*, Nanny wants to do the job of caring for Grayer right, but instead feels only frustration and impotence in her realization that Grayer's parents (her principals) ignore his needs. While she tries to use her expertise to help Grayer, she is unable to mandate that the "job" of loving Grayer be done well. Similarly, in the U.S. executive, bureaucrat-agents often feel frustrated by the requests and actions of their less informed political agents: political appointees and congressional staffers (Maranto 1993; Cohen 1998). In Nanny's case, only after being fired does she feel free to critique her principal:

All right—slamming the door in your child's face: not okay. Locking the door to keep your son out when we're all home: also not okay. Buying a studio in the building for "private time": definitely not okay....[Instead, why don't you] just on a whim, eat dinner with him one night a week (McLaughlin & Kraus, p. 302).

### ***Monitoring to Reduce Information Asymmetry... and Increase Agent Alienation***

As noted earlier, principals often try to overcome their information asymmetries by monitoring their agents closely, leading to increased paperwork and decreased trust. *Nanny Diaries'* answer to the problem of monitoring is quite one-sided, since the novel is written from the agent's point of view. In *Nanny Diaries*, the mommy-principal is intrusive, even unethical, in her mistrust of Nanny's goals. For instance, she gives Nanny a cell phone. Initially delighted, Nanny soon realizes that the phone is only to be used for Mrs. X's incoming calls with more errands to run, questions about whether she can change her hours to suit the new schedule, and blatant concerns that Nanny is shirking.

Mrs. X distrusts Nanny while at the same time knowing little about her job. This leads her to attempt to micro-manage Nanny, often with a series of contradictory and unfeasible orders, such as keeping the ill Grayer happy while forbidding him TV, or under no circumstances feeding him pizza twice in one day. Yet Mrs. X is not sufficiently invested in her child to effectively monitor whether Nanny follows these many and varied commands, and often Nanny does not in fact do so.<sup>10</sup> Further, Nanny is not always a perfect or even good agent, as when she is drunk on the job during a Halloween party, one time when she is clearly shirking her role. Yet Nanny is consistently the more sympathetic partner in the principal-agent relationship since she knows and cares about her job, while her principal does not.<sup>11</sup>

As the book draws to its unhappy conclusion, the distrust that Mrs. X and her friends as principals feel towards their nannies is palpable. These principals see any conflicting goals as their nannies' attempts to undermine their authority as "household managers." (See also Rowe 2003 on this theme.) From Nanny's perspective, the final insult occurs when she accidentally overhears Mrs. X saying that she has installed a "Nannycam" or hidden camera in one of the teddy bears in Grayer's bedroom. Nanny sees such hidden monitoring as both unethical and unnecessary. Unfortunately, Mrs. X does not seem to try to motivate Nanny by stressing their compatible goals. In her view, Nanny should have no goals other than what the mommy-principal tells her to have, and the mommy-principal has complete monitoring rights over the nanny-agent. Similarly, as

Anechiarico and Jacobs (1996) contend, modern ethics legislation often seeks a positively “panoptic” level of surveillance over public officials.

### ***Scapegoating: Adding a Psychological Dimension to an Economic Theory***

Although agency theory usually examines situations in which the principal’s suspicions of agent laziness and/or sabotage are accurate, the principal is not omniscient. This case study examines a situation in which the psychological phenomenon of scapegoating motivates the principal to increase conflict between herself and the agent.

An increasingly prevalent factor in *The Nanny Diaries* is the scapegoating that occurs between the mommy-principal and nanny-agent. Scapegoating, or displacing one’s frustration and anger at a more powerful actor (such as one’s husband) onto a safer target (such as one’s nanny) occurs frequently in the novel. Similarly, career bureaucrat-agents are often scapegoat for events beyond their control (Goodsell 1994), a tendency exacerbated by the fact that often it is unclear whether their chief principals are presidential appointees or members of Congress (Wood and Waterman 1994). Indeed, political appointees may sometimes blame bureaucrats for congressional actions (Maranto 1993; Hello 1977).

Mrs. X’s treatment of Nanny shows several examples of scapegoating. She displaces her anger at her dissolving marriage onto the safer target of Nanny ever more frequently as the marriage disintegrates and Mr. X draws further away. After each argument with her husband, Mrs. X finds something to criticize about Nanny’s job performance. By blaming Nanny for her problems, Mrs. X can deny both that her husband is a hopeless cause and that she herself is culpable for their marital woes. In the mommy-principal’s final petty revenge upon Nanny for witnessing her humiliation at the hands of her husband, Mrs. X fires Nanny unexpectedly while Grayer is asleep and refuses Nanny the chance to even tell her charge goodbye.

### ***Role Ambiguity and Inevitable Role Conflict***

Nannies face difficulties in part because of the often close and ambiguous relationship between nanny-agents and their principal(s). In *Nanny Diaries*, Nanny is hired by Mrs. X and paid by Mr. X to care for Grayer. She has to please each of them. However those three—Grayer, Mrs. X, and Mr. X, often have very different goals, leading to a question of *role ambiguity*—which person should Nanny please/obey first? Sometimes, Nanny is caught up in the conflict between her two employers as well. When she discovers Mr. X’s affair, she is torn between telling Mrs. X, as a loyal employee of hers, or, doing as the housekeeper advises her, “[I]t’s not my problem. And don’t you make it your problem either. It’s none of our business” (p. 201).

Another example of role ambiguity starts with Nanny’s discovery that Mr. X is having an affair right under Mrs. X’s nose. In a beautiful example of both information asymmetry and role ambiguity, Nanny tries to decide whether to tell Mrs. X about the affair or keep the information to herself—a matter akin to that a Pentagon career executive might face during the Iran-Contra scan-

dal. The affair leads to an extremely farcical situation that further illustrates the difficulty of serving more than one principal. Mr. X, the “law” in the house and Nanny’s bill-payer, tacitly allows his mistress to order Nanny to stock the apartment for a tryst when Mrs. X is out of town with Grayer, leading to the nanny-agent’s dilemma as she tries to decide whether to obey the conflicting goals of Mr. X or Mrs. X.

An important theme in both principal-agent theory and *Nanny Diaries* is the inevitability and difficulty of *role conflict*. First, a nanny-agent’s role may be inherently conflicted, just as any caretaker’s would be. Nanny has to discipline Grayer and set firm boundaries on his behavior while simultaneously providing the love and unconditional positive regard he so desperately needs. Similarly, some bureaucrats, such as public school teachers, must reconcile incompatible goals, such as teaching, maintaining order, and extensively documenting special education and other practices (Innersole 2003). A second type of conflict occurs between the nanny-agent’s and the mommy-principal’s goals for the child. In one humorous episode, Nanny is taken to task by Mrs. X’s consultant because Grayer didn’t get into the exclusive private pre-school Mrs. X wanted. The consultant advises Nanny to “[leverage] your assets to escalate Grayer’s performance” (p. 179). Nanny retorts that, “[h]em’s stressed. And I feel...the best thing I can do is give him some downtime so that his imagination can grow without being forced in one direction or another” (p. 179).

A third type of role conflict, and the one most prevalent in the book, is the clash between Mrs. X’s expectations for Nanny’s behavior and Nanny’s own values. Such incidents range from the trivial (Nanny is forced to wear a ridiculous giant Lela Teletubby costume when accompanying the family to a trendy Manhattan Halloween party) to the ridiculous, as when Mrs. X tells Nanny that her refusal to accompany the family on their first day of vacation is unacceptable, despite the fact that Nanny is only missing it to attend her college graduation.

In the end, Nanny’s personal values of self-preservation supercede her willingness to obey Mrs. X, the mommy-principal. Nanny starts to question Mrs. X, albeit very gently, and to object to Mrs. X’s unreasonable demands. The final break in the agent-principal relationship occurs when Grayer, recognizing Nanny’s loyalty to and caring for him, runs to Nanny instead of his mother when he gets hurt, thus embarrassing the mommy-principal at a crowded party.

“‘Nannnyyy!’ he cries. Mrs. X gets there first. ‘Nannnyyy!’ She tries to bend down to him, but he hits out at her and flings his bleeding arm around my legs. ‘No! I want Nanny.’” (p. 292).

Perhaps because the nanny role overlaps the mommy role so much, there is a great danger in doing one’s job too well, as Nanny observes (McLaughlin & Kraus, p.11):

Looking back, it was a setup to begin with. They want you. You want the job. But to do it well is to lose it.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, *The Nanny Diaries* is a rich area to mine for illustrations of principal-agent theory. Applying principal-agent theory to this novel about nannies for the Manhattan social elite is amusing. But it is more than that. Using fictional applications extends the theory's explanatory power and offers a useful teaching tool for social scientists. Further, we believe that *Nanny Diaries* illustrates the potential for applying principal-agent theory to professional child-care. *Nanny Diaries* is only a first step—its fictional nature and rather one-sided championing of the nanny-agent limit its ability to illustrate. Still, the varying levels of involvement between principal and agent, the ambiguity of the contract, the difficulty of monitoring, the information asymmetries, the attempts at agent monitoring, the agent's alienation, the clash of values, and the importance of the job make extensions of the principal-agent theory useful in both governmental bureaucracy and professional childcare.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> We wish to thank Matthew Baird, Catherine Warrick, Jonathan Mills, and Marissa Martino Golden as well as our students including Patrick O'Brien, Anne Marie Bonner, Noah Karpf-Politi, Christina Castro, Charles Myers, John Marty, Deirdre Ramos, Steve Homola, and Alexandria Nguyen for their assistance. The usual caveats apply.

<sup>2</sup> As Downs (1967) and Ouchi (1980, 1981) suggest, information asymmetries may be less severe in organizations where employees serve long apprenticeships and where the top principal was once an agent. Or as Downs puts it, every general was once a lieutenant, and thus might understand how to interpret a lieutenant's reports.

<sup>3</sup> As one career bureaucrat told one of the authors, her agency was careful not to promote people too dedicated to the organization, since if legally required to, true civil servants had to "kill their children."

<sup>4</sup> For similar examples from relations between political appointees and career executives in the Reagan administration, see Maranto (1993).

<sup>5</sup> The book is not to be confused with the light-hearted, saccharine movie of the same name, very loosely based on the novel.

<sup>6</sup> To some degree *The Nanny Diaries* can be thought of as comic Anthropology, with the relatively normal, middle class college student Nanny exploring the strange rituals and customs of New York's super rich, a world of "balding paunchy men and their second or third wives, who're just biding time till their next peel or tuck" (p. 291). We wish to thank Christina Castro, in particular, for pointing this out.

<sup>7</sup> Perhaps most poignantly, Grayer tries never to go anywhere without his father's business card, a beloved symbol of his nearly completely absent dad. We thank John Marty for making this point.

<sup>8</sup> In fact, one cannot explore *Nanny Diaries* fully without also bringing in social psychological role theory (Goffman, 1959). According to Stryker and Stratham, (1985, p. 333), "roles are what actors in positions do, as constrained by normative expectations...they are shaped by shared values and norms internalized by actors and made parts of their personalities." Jobs typically entail roles—for instance, it is perfectly appropriate for a flight attendant to offer a warm smile and inquire after your day, but the same warm smile coming from a policewoman issuing a ticket would give most people pause. As noted earlier, even the official job description of a nanny hints at conflicting roles—she is primarily a child-care worker, but her job description may also include that of housekeeper and cook. Given the myriad duties involved in child care, role conflict occurs frequently and in numerous ways. Role theory, like principal-agent theory, is helpful in illuminating areas of conflict in the workplace. Intra-role conflict occurs when differing work members (such as principals Grayer versus Mrs. X) have different expectations for the role of nanny. In *The Nanny Diaries*, the "marginal" role of the nanny-agent has at least three reference groups: her internalized view of what a nanny should be, Mrs. X's expectations of her as a servant and errand-girl, and Grayer's desperate need for her as a surrogate mother. Goode (1960, cited in Stryker and Stratham, 1985) notes that many strategies exist for managing role conflict, including manipulating one's role, compartmentalizing the role, delegating troublesome aspects of the role to others, expanding the role to facilitate other role demands, and eliminating the role relationship altogether. As we shall see, both the mommy-principal and the nanny-agent use several of these options during their difficult time together.

<sup>9</sup> As Charles Myers and Patrick O'Brien pointed out to us, once Nanny accepted these un-negotiated changes in her relationship with her employer without either complaining or seeking alternative employment, she should have known that Mrs. X would exploit her. O'Brien suggests that "in relatively free societies like our own, you only get abused in the workplace (especially if you're an upper middle class white girl in Manhattan) if you allow yourself to be." Similarly, Myers argues that "Mrs. X may be a myopic, greedy, self-indulgent, egotistical, lazy, catty, pretty, sub-par trophy wife incapable of handling even simple domestic tasks, but for once she is not at fault." We are not so certain. After all, as a full-time college student and an increasingly full-time nanny, Nanny had limited time and cognitive capacity to pursue other options. In addition, over time she became dedicated to Grayer, a natural enough reaction for someone who likes children. It is thus understandable that she did not pursue other market opportunities with sufficient vigor.

<sup>10</sup> We thank Noah Karpf-Politi for pointing this out.

<sup>11</sup> We thank Steve Homola for pointing this out.

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# Bree Michaels Goes to State Prison: Fictionalizing Lived Experience in Order to Learn from It

*Diane Ketelle*

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We have encountered Bree Michaels as an elementary school principal (2006, PV VIII-2) and as a college professor (2008, PVX-1). In this installment Bree, who is now the Associate Dean of the School of Education at a small liberal arts college, explores a new world as she volunteers to teach narrative understanding to inmates at a maximum security state prison.

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For the past year I have been teaching a narrative writing workshop at San Quentin State Prison, one of California's highest security prisons for men. Someone asked me recently if I ever feel afraid of my students. Our class, after all, includes individuals who have committed armed robbery, gang-assault, and homicide. But I do not fear my students because through their writing I have come to know them not merely as their convictions, but as complex human beings which takes me far beyond concepts of good versus evil. This class began in an unlikely way. A student of mine, Lena, who teaches at San Quentin State Prison, invited me to visit her class. I did visit and was given a full tour of the prison. During my visit I had many conversations with inmates, most of whom were young and African American. As a person involved in public schooling for over two decades this experience revealed to me, in real terms, the trajectory of many young urban students enrolled in failing public schools. The experience shook me to my core and caused me to want to return. That was the birth of my narrative writing class that enrolls inmates who are interested in writing about their lives.



Since I started working at the prison I see the world in a different way. My work there has challenged ideas I once held of who might be in prison. I don't really know who I thought I would meet in such a place, but it probably related to some ideas about *bad guys*. I have learned through my students that the world isn't as simple as all that and that we all need to break through ideas about *certain kinds of people*.

When I go to the prison I see what pain looks like, and seeing the pain matters. I tell people teaching there makes me feel like a good teacher or that it is eye opening or it makes me feel like I'm making a contribution. All of these things are partially true. All I really know is that listening to my students stories is healing. This work has opened me up to the world around me in new ways.

Teaching at San Quentin has taught me that everyone has a story to tell and everyone benefits from sharing their story. The writing my students have done has taken me deeper inside the narrative process and helped me better understand the power writing can have in a person's life as he/she works to define a kind of personal truth over and over again.



I have been lucky that my twelve week courses get good enrollment. Twelve guys have signed up for my course titled *Write Your Life* this time around. The point of the course is to help the students make meaning from their lived experiences through reflection and reconsideration. Through externalizing their experience they can begin to consider it in new ways.

There are the usual cast of characters in the class on the first day. Mr. Hammond calls himself "The Fixer," and Mr. Williams insists on being called Billy, for none of the usual reasons. There is a guy who wants to be called "Blue" and another who calls himself "Absent," even though he is always very present. It's clear the group has come to write. Mr. Dawson says, "I'm here to figure some stuff out."

I start by talking to my students about how we are all storied beings. I explain that the way we present ourselves in the world is often through stories. Narratives are representations of our lives and each story represents a personal kind of truth. The stories we tell may represent a personal truth to us in the present, even though we may tell the same story in different way another time. I tell them that having an experience doesn't mean you have learned from it. We have to take the time to reconsider an experience in order to learn.

I have to always be thinking of ways to navigate the breadth of skills in the class. Some students can read, but others can't. It is the same with writing. I try to start where they are and do my best to move them forward. I try to get them thinking about big ideas and then I teach them skills in the context of their personal writing.

Most of the writing I get starts safe, grappling with how to represent themselves in stories. It doesn't take long for my students to move away from safety and face themselves in new ways. In the beginning, Mr. Thomas portrayed himself as a perfect father, even though he had been incarcerated for most of his daughter's life. It took some time to find ways to help him find his voice and face his estrangement from his daughter. Other members of the class have spent time grappling with how they ended up in prison. All of their stories help me understand the complexity of regret and how hard it is for any of us to face our actions and forgive ourselves or others.

Through *re-storying* my students can tell the same story over and over again – each time finding a new *truth*.



Everywhere I go I see my students. They are young men standing on street corners or young fellows checking out during class at the high school a few blocks away from where I work. Why are some people robbed of opportunity?



Today I start a lesson to get the guys to think about their lives through memories. I give them each six three by five cards. I ask them to think about their earliest memory and then to write other memories from their lives on the other cards. As they finish I ask if anyone would like to share. I am happy to learn that everyone wants to share, so I agree to write notes from their cards on the white board. Here are the first three memory boards that went up:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Mom left when I was 2	Foster dad pushed face in b-day cake	Sexually abused by neighbor	Stole a bike	Near death experience (3 times)	Drugs
I was removed by social services when I was 4	Mom wasn't around – drug addicted	At 5 choked on plastic – dead for 2 minutes	Behavior problems at school	Joined military	Became pre-school teacher
Place in foster care at birth	Joy ride – stole car when I was 7	Foster dad gave beatings	Juvenile Hall at 13	State prison for 10 years straight	Back in for 2 years

As the stories unfolded I felt a pain in my stomach. Each of my students volunteered their memories and shared them in a very matter of fact way. The pain and respect in the room was palatable.

As we got to the final story I began thinking if we, as a society, could deal with abandonment, trauma and abuse it could be possible that prisons wouldn't be necessary. I started thinking if we, as a society, could effectively deal with pain, perhaps there would be no crime, hurt or strife.



I know what kind of day it is going to be when I get to the prison gate. When I walk up to the front



gate if the guard stops me and says, “That’s close enough,” I know things are tense and folks are confused about who needs guarding. Entering the gate and passing the check points that follow to get to where I teach is like entering into a parallel universe. Sometimes it takes time to get inside because they are counting guns, or one day it took forever to get out because they found an orange jumpsuit and had to count inmates. Later I found out the jumpsuit belonged to someone who had been paroled earlier that same day. It is important not to run inside the prison grounds since the shooters only see the motion and anyone, even a volunteer, could get shot.



Mr. Davis is six foot six, an African American man who is 58. When I first met him he told me he scares some people, testing me to see if I was afraid. He decided to befriend me and he has taken it upon himself to be my teaching assistant. He helps me with the out count, which is the way the institution counts the inmates every afternoon. Mr. Davis walks me to the sergeant’s office to have my class announced in the dorms. He helps me as we approach the station, “Today it’s Anderson, just be cool and let me talk.”

Mr. Davis says, “This is Bree. She’s a professor teaching the new course called *Write Your Life*. She needs you to announce it.”

Sergeant Anderson looks at me over some papers and barks, “Do you have a brown card?”

“I don’t have any card,” I reply meekly.

Mr. Davis steps in and tells the sergeant that Lena is also teaching and she has a brown card. As we walk away Mr. Davis says, “You did real good back there.” I suddenly realized that in that moment I felt safer with Mr. Davis than I did with the guards.



My students want to continue this work, and although some students may be released as we move forward, I will continue to teach. My students’ desire to continue is perhaps the biggest part of my learning. The fact that I show up each week matters to them as much as it matters to me.

From this work I have learned that all of us are damaged but have the potential to find our best selves with the aid of a pen and paper. The power of our words invites us to test ourselves, maybe tentatively at first, and then later with greater assurance. We can all rise above the concrete and sharp wire of our painful memories and personal mysteries and lighten our load in order to gain new perspective. That is ultimately the power of narrative knowing and making meaning from our lives.

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# The Speaker of the House of Representatives

**By Mary Parker Follett  
(N.P.): BiblioBazaar, 2008**

Reviewed by *John R. Phillips*

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In the last two decades of her life Mary Parker Follett (1868-1933) achieved international renown for her lectures and writings on organizations and management (Follett, 1949; Fox & Urwick, 1973; Graham, 2003; Metcalf & Urwick, 1941). In the succeeding decades her thoughts on those topics have continued to exert a powerful influence on public-sector and private-sector scholars of widely varying perspectives. Her preeminence in that field has also tended to overshadow her earlier work in political science and psychology. In the former field, she made notable contributions in her books on *The Speaker of the House of Representatives* (Follett, 1896) and *The New State: Group Organization the Solution of Popular Government* (Follett, 1918). In psychology, the broad scope of her knowledge of the field and her ability to apply it to every level of organizational life—up to and including international relations—is evident in *Creative Experience* (Follett, 1924). Despite her prominence in all of these fields, Follett's lectures and papers have largely been accessible to scholars only through library copies. The solitary exception to that generalization is *The New State* which has long been available in paperback (Follett, 1998/1918). Thus the appearance of any of her books in reprint form is cause for celebration among those wanting copies for their own libraries.

*The Speaker of the House of Representatives* has for many years been one of the scarcest of Follett's books. Now we have from BiblioBazaar a high quality photographic reprint of the original 1896 edition (published in London by Longmans, Green), that will be a boon to scholars in a variety of fields. Historians, especially those interested in the history of Congress, will find valuable biographical sketches of each of the men who held the Speaker's chair from the first Congress to the time of Follett's writing. Political scientists, historians, and others with an interest in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Progressive Era, or the origins of modern "realism" in political analysis will also find the book valuable as it firmly situates Follett's ideas within the tradition of Woodrow Wilson, Frank Goodnow, and others in the Progressive camp who were so critical of governmental institutions in that day. Her book is valuable, too, as an addition to the corpus of work beginning most notably with Alexander Hamilton that reflects a deep and continuing infatuation

with the British parliamentary system, a system against which the Congressional-Presidential model is unfavorably compared. It will even be enlightening to specialists in organization and management as there is a dramatic contrast between Follett's enthusiasm for centralizing power in the hands of the Speaker (1896) as compared to the even greater enthusiasm for decentralization of power that characterizes her later work on organizations and management.

Follett's work on the Speaker originated in her undergraduate days when she studied with Albert Bushnell Hart, the Harvard scholar who wrote an introduction to the book that is full of praise for his former student. The historical training that she received from Hart is evident in the opening chapter where she traces the origins of the Speaker's power back to the days of the Tudor monarchs. That chapter and the following one on the method of choosing the Speaker set the stage for Follett's analysis (in Chapters III through X) of the full array of power sources available to the Speaker. Those chapters are a mine of detailed information on the personal element in the speakership (III), the speaker's parliamentary prerogatives (IV), the speaker's vote (V), maintenance of order (VI), dealing with obstruction (VII), the committee system (VIII), power through recognition (IX), and the speaker's power as a political leader (X). The final chapter (XI) is a broad overview of "the speaker's place in our political system" It is here, in her retrospective view of the development of the office and powers of the Speaker that Follett so fully reflects the tenor of her times. She writes that the "history of the House of Representatives shows that the consolidation of power has been an inevitable development [and that] entirely irrespective of party tenets, there is at present an inevitable tendency towards the centralization of power" (Follett, 2008/1896, p. 307). Viewing that development favorably, Follett notes that "the power of the Speaker seems not only inevitable but, under our present congressional system desirable" (p. 308).

In fact centralization of power in the hands of the Speaker is quite considerably more than "desirable." Follett's rhetoric is energetic, passionate, and moralistic. In a delightfully convoluted construction, she describes early Speakers as "respectable men, but by no means remarkable" and offers something of a qualified "excuse" for their unremarkable character in observing that "It was not the fault of the House that its first Speakers were second-rate men; it put its ablest men into the chair" (p. 67). Follett's faint praise of "second-rate" Speakers as being the "ablest" men in the House surely damns the capabilities of the rest of them. It is, indeed, her negative assessment of the quality of leadership that lies at the heart of her advocacy of centralized power. Her concluding chapter hammers at this theme again and again:

- "We cannot secure efficient legislation without a greater concentration of power than we have hitherto thought necessary. It would be absurd to retard our development by a too strict adherence to an ideal of democracy impossible for a great nation" (pp. 313-314).
- "As a matter of fact, Congress is incompetent to legislate wisely under the old conditions" (p. 314)
- "There are certain truths, however, which we must accept if experience is to go for anything;

and one of them is that the unregenerated House of Representatives is not and cannot be a legislative body” (p. 314)

- In response to the charge that the accretion of powers in the Speaker is unconstitutional, she responds that “it is sometimes necessary to act in an extra-constitutional manner. As progress means change, we must be ready to supplement the text of the Constitution with unwritten principles unless we wish to end our days where we were placed by the statesmen of 1789” (pp. 314-315)

These severe judgments upon Congressional failures are followed by a careful and balanced evaluation of arguments in favor of and opposition to the Parliamentary model. Follett well understood the pitfalls attendant upon constitutional change. It is exactly that recognition that underlies her advocacy of “unwritten principles,” of the need to make good use of “the experience of a hundred years,” of an acceptance of the growth of the Speaker’s powers as being a “natural development.” These formulations are, of course, entirely consistent with the American way of looking at the constitution and constitutional change, a cautious approach that is rooted in our English heritage. Readers familiar with Follett’s life will know that in later years she lived in England, a country which she grew to love greatly. Her life and work there brought an ever-deepening appreciation of English life, literature, and philosophy. Follett, the enthusiastic Anglophile is evident even in the closing pages of this, her first published work: “The Anglo-Saxon race does not take kindly to making tabula rasa of existing government in order to found a new and perfect system. American government has proceeded by experience rather than by experiment. In order to improve our government we must first try to understand our political genius, to take into account present forces, and to watch the tendency of our institutions, and then we can make such alterations or advances as shall be directly in accordance with this tendency” (p. 318).

In 2009 as in 1896, we Americans continue to evaluate our institutions very much in the way that Follett described. We struggle, still, to understand our political genius, to watch the tendency of our institutions, and to make such changes as we judge to be in accordance with our history. Those who share that view will find much to value in *The Speaker of the House of Representatives*.

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# Woodrow Wilson and the Roots of Modern Liberalism

**By Ronald J. Pestritto. Lanham,  
MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2005**

Reviewed by *Bob Blankenberger*

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Entering an abundant field of literature on Woodrow Wilson, Ronald J. Pestritto's *Woodrow Wilson and the Roots of Modern Liberalism* finds a niche by providing valuable insight into the intellectual formation of one of the nation's most important presidents and theorists. Because of the pivotal nature of Wilson's presidency, his contributions to political science and public administration, and his prominence in the Progressive movement, studies of Wilson abound. Pestritto's contribution is an important one to the subject as he examines Wilson's career based on an intellectual continuity identifiable from Wilson's earliest scholarship. Pestritto draws from an impressive collection of documents spanning Wilson's scholarly essays, papers, lectures, speeches and books.

In his own words, Pestritto's central thesis is that "Wilson was a central figure in progressivism's fundamental rethinking of traditional American constitutionalism" (253). Positioning himself in the literature on Wilson the author rejects the traditional view of many that Wilson is a constitutional conservative who resisted expansion of federal power. Likewise, he disagrees with those who characterize Wilson as a Jeffersonian who defended the rights of the states against expanding federal power. In doing so, Pestritto goes further than those who agree that Wilson did expand state power, but only broke from his conservative constitutionalism reluctantly due to circumstances that were forced upon him. Pestritto sides with those scholars, particularly from political science, who argue that Wilson was not a defender of constitutional traditionalism, but he goes further than most contending Wilson did not undergo a later conversion to progressivism and that the basic tenets of his thought were consistent since the time of his early academic work. Pestritto argues Wilson was a critic of traditional constitutionalism and instead favored German state theory, principally that of Hegel. Pestritto's examination of Wilson's historical works demonstrates that Wilson was consistently a strong believer in the growing power of federal government and he criticized those who attempted to slow that growth.

Pestritto describes the influence on Wilson of the English Historical School and its confidence in

the progress of history and the value of historical development to a people. Like Edmund Burke, whom he admired, Wilson argued that political principles are not abstract but are grounded in historical time and place. Pestritto's repeated application of Wilson's criticisms of the founding fathers and their emphasis on timeless abstract principles of natural rights is a particularly compelling argument and sheds light on Wilson's later views. Wilson's critique of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution as documents grounded in abstract principle and inapplicable in the modern world is a powerful one. Pestritto correctly emphasizes this point in his rejection of the notion that Wilson was a Jeffersonian as many have contended. Several scholars recognize this influence of the Historical School on Wilson to some degree or other, but few see it as a consistent underpinning to his thought. Pestritto agrees that Wilson was not strictly a part of the Historical School although he was heavily influenced by it. For example, Pestritto points out that unlike many in the English Historical School, he was not an opponent of growing state power, and in fact was a strong advocate for it.

The influence of the English Historical School does not, however, fully develop the roots of Wilson's thoughts. A fuller understanding arises from Pestritto's exploration of the neglected influence of Hegelianism on Wilson, contending that that scholars have failed to discover the deeper and more consistent connections that he finds between Wilson and Hegelian historicism. Wilson's faith in progress was akin to that of the historical school, but it was also a rational progress derived from Hegel. Wilson's argument in *The State* (1889), for example, holds that the state developed organically and was not based on abstract principles. Its development was a result of Hegelian-style dialectical conflicts. This dovetails well with Wilson's Christian background which saw the advance of history as a product of the unfolding of God's rational plan. According to Wilson that plan is one of progress toward freedom. This is not individual freedom, but an awareness of the ability to direct the power of the state as a manifestation of the collective will of its people. This view is like Hegel's actualization of God's plans through the dialectical process of history. It also helps to explain Wilson's unwillingness to compromise. If one has rationally uncovered the direction of the flow of history, then one need not compromise with those who do not correctly comprehend that process. The process was a part of a greater plan and would not be denied.

This Hegelian influence on Wilson, Pestritto argues, also helps to explain his disturbing views on race. Those views were not exclusively a product of Wilson's Southern heritage; they also arose from the historical nature of his political philosophy. Wilson interpreted the unfolding of history as showing that some races were more progressive than others, a position corresponding to the Hegelian view of the superior defeating the inferior through conflict as history progresses. Accordingly Pestritto explains that this was why Wilson so detested reconstruction. In Wilson's view, this gave blacks an artificially superior position in government that was not rectified until whites regained the dominant position in the South allowing progress to occur again. Pestritto's description of Wilson's rejection of natural rights and social contract theory is an intriguing one. This argument enabled him to discard the notion that national governmental power needed to be checked in the constitutional sense in order to protect people's natural rights. As Pestritto points out Wilson, influenced by the Historical School and Hegelianism, argued for the

need to move beyond political theory based on universal abstract principles. History is the basis of government and real government deals in practical circumstances. Wilson contends that the French Revolution failed because it acted out of abstract principles but was not ready historically to reach that stage of development, while the English democratic development succeeded because they were historically conditioned to do so. Wilson is neglecting that the development of natural rights theory to a position of prominence was a product of historical development for that era. The act by thinkers of that time of constructing their arguments in favor of constitutional government based on natural rights theory was not possible in prior eras, and was thus a part of the proper historical development of that time. Although abstract principles attempt to reach beyond the bounds of time, they are no more insulated in their historical development than any other theories. There is nothing ahistorical about the development of a theory that is based on abstract principles any more than there could be an ahistorical development of the printing press or steam engine.

Pestritto seeks to avoid the question of just how much influence Wilson had in the founding of the new political science and of the science of public administration by emphasizing that without a doubt he was an important figure in this development. The influence of the German political thought on him is apparent in his emphasis on developing a scientific approach to political science and administration. But Pestritto points out that Wilson was not a positivist in the traditional sense. The positivist value-neutral approach did not fit with Wilson's historicist approach. Wilson believed that the study and interpretation of historical development was an essential component to serving the state.

Pestritto describes Wilson as a supporter of increasing power of government and a critic of the Constitution, not a defender of it, a view Wilson held throughout his career. In addition, Wilson was critical of those who were unwilling to adapt to new circumstances brought on by the changing historical era. In his historical writings, for example, Wilson praised Jefferson not for his advocacy of limited government, but for his recognition as president of the need to expand federal power when history warranted it. By contrast, in the Bank of the United States controversy, John Marshall was praised by Wilson for his expansive construction of the Constitution while Jackson was criticized for opposing them. Pestritto contends that in his writings Wilson viewed the government not as a threat to society, but as the expression of the will of the people whose power should be manifested through it. In addition, throughout his scholarly career Wilson wrote extensively about abandoning the founder's view of limiting the power of central government. When he deviated from this position, as in the election campaign of 1912, Pestritto persuasively argues that campaign rhetoric, that appears to contradict some of his earlier ideas, was designed to position Wilson in the race and to appeal to Bryan Democrats whose support he had to have in order to win the tight race. As he points out, Wilson only gained the nomination after 46 ballots were cast, and only after Bryan supported him. Once president, he applied the ideas he held consistently throughout his scholarly and political career.

Pestritto's work is an important contribution to understanding a complex and challenging figure. His interpretation of often neglected material from Wilson's writings, lectures, and speeches pro-

vides new insights into his understanding of the state, Constitutional government, and public administration. No one acts exclusively from pure theory devoid of practical necessity, and Wilson is no exception. But no proper understanding of Wilson is possible without a thorough analysis of the theoretical framework out of which he operated. Pestritto's analysis does precisely that and those interested in the theory and practice of public administration, as understood by one of the discipline's preeminent founders, will find much of value here.

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# Public Voices Symposium

## The Founding of Public Administration

**Michael W. Popejoy, Ph.D., Guest Editor**

### Call for Manuscripts

Prologue: As public administration nears the end of the first decade of a new century, a look back is in order to provide us with perspective on what brought us here. If the metaphor is true that we stand on the shoulders of giants, as we view our world today who were those giants, what did they show us and what risks did they take and why?

Further, who influenced the founders of the Republic and what were their motives? There exists a rich history on the founding of the Republic, but what issues have not yet been explored? Which of these seminal issues have been explored but may have been interpreted inaccurately? Are there new revelations available to us today? Have some Founders' contributions been over attributed, and have others been overlooked, such as those of Aaron Burr?

In our rush to look forward at various reformations and transformations of public administration, we may have slowed or stopped scholarship on where we came from. This special issue of Public Voices will allow us a pause to look back even as we push forward.

The goal of this symposium is to allow the widest possible discretion for people writing historical pieces. An article would work if it covered any period or people from pre-revolutionary times to the latter years of the 20th century. Important events, issues and theories may need to be re-examined.

In keeping with the humanistic approach that characterizes Public Voices, articles may be historically factual, creative nonfiction, novelized history, art, poetry, film history, and book reviews of remarkable, influential books on governance that have appeared over the past three centuries.

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