

# Public Voices



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# ***Public Voices***

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**Detail: Peace, Courage and Fortitude**

*Attilio Piccirilli (sculptor) and H. Van Buren Magonigle (architect)*

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**Cover Notes**

# **Cover Photograph**

## **The National Maine Monument, 1913**

### ***Detail: Peace, Courage and Fortitude***

*Attilio Piccirilli (sculptor) and H. Van Buren Magonigle (architect)*

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The Maine Monument, located in New York City's Central Park, commemorates 258 U.S. sailors who perished on board the battleship Maine when she was sunk by Spain in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898. Outraged by this hideous crime, the U.S. demanded that Spain, the former ruler of Cuba, withdraw from the island. Spain responded with the declaration of war. The ensuing U.S. victory in the Spanish-American War produced the Treaty of Paris, signed December 10, 1898, which freed Cuba, ceded Puerto Rico and Guam to the United States and surrendered the Philippines to the U.S. Therefore, the monument commemorates the U.S. emergence as a world power.

The allegorical figures are Peace, Courage and Fortitude. Peace, a standing and robed female figure, reigns over Courage and Fortitude, virtues necessary for the preservation of peace. Courage is a seated male with a hidden challenge emanating from his unwavering gaze and daring posture. The figure of Fortitude is personified by a mother comforting her child at the loss of its father in the Maine's explosion. The group is set within a configuration of a ship, and Peace looks forward to the prow, where a youth stands with his arms extended. The boy is the symbol of Cuba ushering in the new era of freedom and independence.

#### **Reference**

Reynolds, Donald Martin. *Monuments and Masterpieces: Histories and Views of Public Sculpture in New York City*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988.



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# Call for Manuscripts, Book and Film Reviews

*Public Voices* is a unique journal that focuses on historical, artistic and reflective expression concerning public administrators and the public service. Published by the National Center for Public Productivity (NCPD), it is now accepting submissions for Volume VIII.

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# Context-Specific Images of the Archetypical Bureaucrat: Persistence and Diffusion of the Bureaucracy Stereotype

*Steven Van de Walle*

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When the word "bureaucrat" is used, it often bears no relation to the concept of bureaucracy as an efficient way of organizing an administration, as it does in Max Weber's writings (Weber, 1922). Even "civil servant" carries a negative connotation. Civil servants are lazy and avoid risks (Merton, 1940). If a civil servant takes initiative, this is considered as being engendered by the wish to protect one's own or one's administration's interests, as the public choice approach would state (Niskanen, 1971; Dunleavy, 1992). These connotations pervade all uses of the words.

There are many jokes about civil servants. Most officials on television series are portrayed as corrupt. The alienation between the administration and citizens is also a common theme in literature. Beck-Jorgensen analyzed novels in which government-citizen relations serve as the central theme (e.g. Kafka's The Castle). His analysis showed that when dealing with the alienation between the citizen and government, novels or the characters in them never refer to concrete activities, facts or events, but to perceived aims, consequences and contexts of the administration in question (Beck- Jorgensen, 1994).

Evaluations of government are not only based on allegedly objective facts, but also on pre-established images. Context determines when these pre-established images or stereotypes surface and when an honest evaluation of government is made. Even though we find similar processes throughout the entire government, we will focus on the image of civil servants and bureaucrats. Part of the image of the administration is generated by stereotypes. We will not only focus on the content of these stereotypes, but also on the factors that determine their persistence and diffusion despite observations to the contrary. Governments worldwide are making efforts to modernize their administrations in order to give them a more positive image. The existence of negative stereotypes of the administration suggests that any modernizing efforts by governments are bound to fail.

In this article we want to do two things: illustrate how stereotyping theory can help to explain citizens' image of government and demonstrate how, by approaching the stereotype of civil servants as a social norm, the image of civil servants is diffused and preserved.

## The Image of the Administration

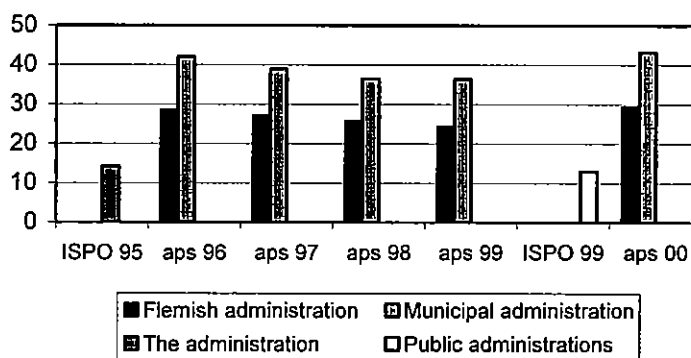
Government efforts to ameliorate the public image of bureaucracy often focus on encounters with public service (Van de Walle and Bouckaert, 2003). The main question is why specific evaluations of government are generally positive; however, when the same people are together with friends, in the pub, on the bus, etc., they speak about government in demonstratively negative way. We think this can be explained by revisiting the theory on stereotypes (Ott and Shafritz, 1994; Rainey, 1996).

Gordon W. Allport, one of the founding fathers of stereotyping theory, attributed two main characteristics to a stereotype. There is an attitude of favor or disfavor, and these attitudes are related to an over-generalized belief (Allport, 1958). Generalization means that people refer to groups or structures as so-called out-groups and not to specific persons or institutions. Confrontation with facts that run counter to the stereotype then does not imply one has to change the stereotype itself, but rather classify these facts as exceptions to the general rule (e.g. All bureaucrats are lazy, except for my neighbor, who's a hard-working civil servant).

Charles Goodsell previously observed this phenomenon by concluding that citizens have a negative view of government in general, but once this government becomes more concrete, the negative attitude largely disappears (Goodsell, 1994). The evaluation of government -as a whole is different from the evaluation of the separate agencies that comprise government (Princeton Survey Research Associates and Pew Charitable Trust, 2000). Similar observations are found everywhere. Parents evaluate the educational system in a negative way, but are positive about their children's school (Loveless, 1997). Individual members of parliament are rated favorably, but Congress has a negative image (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 1995). Citizens distrust government, but give public services good ratings. Dinsdale and Marson refer to research which shows that the more specific a public service under question is, the higher the satisfaction score.

A good example of this theory can be found in the following meta-analysis of opinion surveys in Belgium. Both the yearly APS survey and the ISPO-election research use the same method; however, the former asks for trust in the "Flemish (regional<sup>1</sup>) administration" and the "municipal administration," while the latter gauges trust in "administration" and "public administration". Even though the context of the surveys is slightly different (general survey vs. election research), we see a vast difference between the levels of trust in the specific & concrete municipal and Flemish administration and the general administration or public administration. The more abstract the concept, the less trust. This seems to confirm that the more concrete the question, the less impact of the stereotype.

**Figure 1: Trust in Administrations (% trust)**



One of the most obvious expressions of the stereotype becomes visible in public-private dichotomies. Negative attitudes toward public services are not resulting then from how these services work, but simply from the

<sup>1</sup> can be compared to 'state'-level in the US

observation that they are public services. Van Slyke and Roch researched user satisfaction with social and health services in the state of Georgia (Van Slyke and Roch, 2002). Government offered some of these services, and others were offered by not-for-profit organizations. They found that satisfaction partly depended on perceived status of these services. Respondents who thought the service was offered by government gave it a lower rating. Dissatisfied users were inclined to think they were dealing with a government-organized service, even if this was not the case in reality. According to Deakin and Wright, this is a result of the political discourse that is using the slogan “public bad, private good” as an “Orwellian incantation” (Deakin and Wright, 1990). Fox explains it as follows:

Damn-gummint [damn government] is a conflated aggregation, the illogical and shifting mingling of perceptions, symbols, examples, and nonsequitur inferences. Consider that every customer has had a bad experience with some private enterprise. But ‘damn-bidness’ [business] is not a conflated aggregation in high circulation (Fox, 1996).

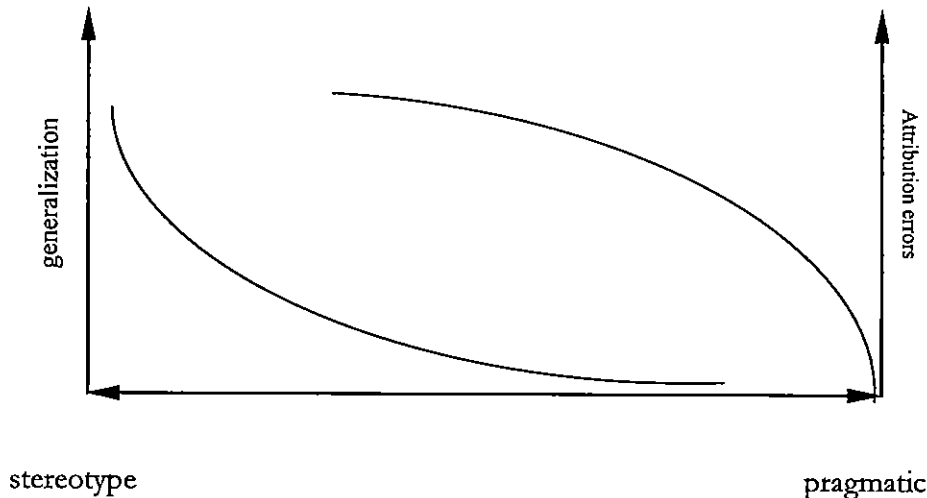
The most revealing research on this public-private stereotype can be found in *Bureaucratic Encounters: A Pilot Study in the Evaluation of Government Services*. When their respondents had the chance to compare private and public services, private services received a higher rating. When the questionnaire became more specific and respondents were asked to compare their last-used public and private organization or service, the difference between public and private disappeared (Katz, Gutek, Kahn and Barton, 1977).

Context appears to be the core factor in explaining differences in the evaluation of public services. In abstract surveys, probing for government in general, the prime referential framework is the stereotype. In more specific situations, actual experience or other forms of fact-based evaluations serve as the platform for opinions. During a spontaneous discussion about government or civil servants, people will refer to the stereotype. In a customer survey, the concrete experience of the encounter will serve as a referential framework, because that information is more easily accessible. In opinion formation people use that information that lies closest at hand in their brain (Zaller, 1996). Context determines whether the opinion given is a pragmatic one (referring to the directly accessible, concrete, factual information) or an ideological one (referring to the easily accessible stereotype) (Katz, Gutek, Kahn and Barton, 1977). The border between these pragmatic and ideological answers is, however, sometimes difficult to define.

What makes it so difficult to change the clichéd image of government is the nature of government itself: many government tasks are very ambiguous. It is often quite difficult to distinguish between governmental and private sector tasks. As a result, many errors of attribution occur (Hoogland DeHoog, Lowery and Lyons, 1990). However, government is more than the administration and civil servants; there are also politics, scandals, laws, etc, which make the referential framework extremely broad and unspecified (Bouckaert and Van de Walle, 2003).

The figure below summarizes the previous paragraphs. Evaluations of the administration can be pragmatic or stereotyped, where a pragmatic evaluation means it is based on the actual encounter between the specific citizen and the specific public service. Such a pragmatic evaluation requires that the citizen does not make attribution errors and that the object of evaluation remains concrete. As errors of attribution occur more frequently and as the situation that has to be evaluated becomes more abstract, the impact of conventional images will become more apparent.

**Figure 2: Pragmatic and Stereotypical Opinions on Administrations**



### **When Stereotypes Become Social Norms: The Diffusion and Persistence of the Bureaucratic Stereotype**

According to recent research, stereotyping is no longer emphasizing generalization and is moving away from cognitive explanations as well (Hinton, 2000).

Stereotypes do not simply exist in individuals' heads. They are socially and discursively constructed in the course of everyday communication, and, once objectified, assume an independent and sometimes prescriptive reality. It is naive to argue that stereotypes are simply a by-product of the cognitive need to simplify reality (Augoustinos and Walker, 1996: 222).

Van Langenhove and Harré bring the use and diffusion of stereotypes further into focus. The explanations provided by Van Langenhove and Harré are better able to expound the use and diffusion of stereotypes. Stereotypes are an instrument to position oneself in the discursive space (Van Langenhove and Harré, 1994: 368). They give the following example on the philosophers' stereotype:

Probably, in many cases the reason [for using the stereotypical image of 'philosophers'] can be very simple: people know that a certain public image is often used and that it makes rather a good impression when one simply conforms to the 'general' idea. So without too much reflection they will call upon that image. In terms of positioning this means first and above all that the speaker is positioning him/herself towards the other speaker as somebody who acts in conformity with the 'general ideas' that live in what (s)he believes to be their common moral order. If the addressee sees him(her)self as part of a moral order in which the cartoon-stereotypes of philosophers are not much appreciated, (s)he will possibly object and say something like 'wait a minute, that's unfair, not all philosophers are etc.'. Whether or not the other speaker will object depends to some extent on his/her beliefs about philosophers but equally so on how (s)he wants the conversation to proceed. If these persons are in the

middle of a business transaction, person B will probably not take up this point in order not to upset the other party.  
(Van Langenhove and Harré, 1994: 367).

Stereotypes then may not be used for their cognitive value, but their use may be simply an expression of conformity to a social norm. The pervasiveness of negative images of bureaucrats may make deviation difficult, if not impossible. Expressing about a positive perspective of bureaucrats attracts scorn and laughter from one's environment. Deviating from the negative social norm is rebuked with social punishment.

Studying individual attitudes is not sufficient to explain pessimistic attitudes toward government, because the expression of these attitudes is part of a prejudice, fashion or even a cultural element. Citrin observed a "Zeitgeist" that stimulates anti-political rhetoric (Citrin, 1974). Distrust then becomes the basic attitude toward government, and there is social pressure to conform to this basic attitude. Sztompka uses the term "culture of distrust": "When a culture of trust - or culture of distrust - appears, the people are constrained to exhibit trust or distrust in all their dealings, independent of individual convictions, and departures from such a cultural demand meet with a variety of sanctions" (Sztompka, 1996).

This suggests that the focus of research should be on the diffusion dynamics and not on the alleged content of these stereotypes. Interference into its diffusion dynamics will not directly alter the stereotype, but merely facilitate contra-stereotypical expressions. Two questions remain: via which channels is diffusion done and how to explain the strength of the stereotype on the general opinion, even when a continuous stream of personal experiences may show it is not correct? These two questions are interrelated.

Bureaucratic condemnation is a popular element in research on negative images of government (see e.g. Lee, 2000). Thad E. Hall analyzed the ways in which civil servants were referred to in speeches by members of the US Congress (Hall, 2002). He found that four different terms were used: bureaucrat, public servant, civil servant and government worker. The word "bureaucrat" was mostly used in a negative context, and bureaucrats were also frequently contrasted to other groups, for example teachers and parents versus Washington education bureaucrats. His phrase, "Bureaucrats are everywhere yet nowhere," provides a valuable summary of the research, because he observed that these bureaucrats never seemed to work in a specific or identifiable agency. According to Haque bureaucratic bashing is a rather recent trend. As Canadian research suggests, citizens initially thought about politicians, not civil servants, when referring to trust in government (Dinsdale and Marson, 1999). Citizens do not consider civil servants as being at the origins of their distrust (Council for Excellence in Government, 1999). In spite of these comments, the political rhetoric has a solid impact on not only citizens' image of the administration, but also their attitudes to civil servants and politicians themselves (Ringeling, 1993; Terry, 1997).

In research on the diffusion of ideas and attitudes, the media receives most of the attention. The Council for Excellence in Government did research on how professions related to government were depicted in television series (Lichter, Lichter, Amundson and Center for Media and Public Affairs, 1999; Council for Excellence in Government, 2001). Notwithstanding a recently observed increase in positive images, the original research depicted a gradual decline of the image of public servants since 1955, and public servants in television series were found to commit twice as much crime as other professional groups. Though teachers and law enforcers were more often than other professions depicted in a positive way, they were in those cases not presented as public officials. Most positive images referred to whistleblowers or people standing up against the system. Positive images were related to individual persons, negative ones to the system. The latter observation is found in most of the research. When bureaucrats are featured in a positive way, they are in most cases front-office workers or they wear uniforms. They are hardly ever classic bureaucrats (Lee and Paddock, 2001). Movies focus on specific professions and on individual heroes (Gabrielian, 2000). This focus on heroes conforms to the findings of the stereotyping theory. The expectancy violation theory states that people not conforming to our expectation, such as hard-working bureaucrats, are evaluated in a more extreme way than other persons with comparable characteristics, such as normal hard-working individuals (Hinton, 2000).

Despite complaints by civil servants about their negative image, they frequently contribute to its persistence. Studies among young civil servants at the Belgian Ministry of Finance on their motivation to work for the ministry revealed that their evaluation of the older civil servants was rather negative and not different from that of the general population (Hondeghe, Parys, Steen and Vandenebeele, 2002). This leads to a situation where it is not only to express negative attitudes about civil servants among citizens, but also among civil servants themselves. This process is not only found among civil servants; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse found that it is the (American) politicians that are the most critical of the functioning of Congress (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 1995).

An often-neglected concept in the study of the diffusion of negative stereotypes of civil servants is that of interpersonal communication. The reason for this omission is perhaps the lack of attractiveness of it as compared to media analysis or research on bureaucratic criticizing. Studying interpersonal communication requires techniques less common to public administration research. A firm theoretical base for research on interpersonal communication can be found in the diffusion studies in sociology and communication science (Rogers, 1995). Even though these studies primarily focus on the diffusion of innovations, they are also useful for analyzing the persistence of opinions. In these studies, communication is not restricted to mass-communicational channels, and a plea is made for interpersonal communication (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1965). These theories emphasize the role of multi-actor communication networks. In his research on political attitudes, Weatherford found that political attitudes are largely influenced by the social context in which the attitudes circulate. This means that these attitudes can show a large degree of harmonization within a social network. This is not only due to the self-selection of interaction partners within the network (Weatherford, 1982). In the spiral of silence hypothesis, the perception of the composition of the public opinion influences the inclination to express one's own opinion by the fear of becoming isolated with a divergent opinion (Noelle-Neuman, 1974; Glynn, Hayes and Shanahan, 1997). The expression of personal opinions is being influenced by what one thinks is the general opinion. Perceptions of the public opinion are thus a key concept. If individuals believe that others in their environment have a negative opinion of government, they will also express themselves in a negative way, because they feel this is what society expects them to do. Most of this social pressure disappears in private discussion or in a survey. The bulk of the research on this phenomenon has focused on racial issues. Even though few respondents identified themselves as in favor of segregation, the same people estimated the number of segregationists in their society as amounting to twice or three times the number of respondents who actually expressed themselves as being segregationists (O'Gorman, 1975). Similarly, respondents evaluated teachers in a positive way, but still stated that most people evaluate teachers in a negative way (Vrieze, van Kessel and Mensink, 2000).

### **Social Engineering: Changing or Circumventing the Stereotype?**

Improving the image of administration is an important concern for governments. In the final section of this article, we want to discuss a number of possibilities for changing citizens' opinion of public administration. Whether such a change in the stereotypical lackluster image of civil servants will have an impact on the actual functioning of government and the public administration is not clear. The desire to change or abolish the stereotypical image is mainly a normative option.

More and better communication is the fashionable solution. Classic government communication however is just one of many channels via which the opinion on public services is diffused. Initiatives to improve the functioning of administration and communication about these improvements will not necessarily lead to a change in the image of civil servants. Quality improvements could lead to more positive assessments in customer satisfaction surveys, because opinions in these surveys are expressed in concrete context. The specificity of this context enables the administration under question to become the prime reference framework for the creation of an opinion. This specific context is not present in most cases, which causes the stereotypical image to act as the prime referential framework.

Based on our analysis of the reasons for the persistence of the stereotypical image, we can identify two possible ways of changing the negative stereotype. One focuses on the specification of opinions and is an accommodation of the stereotype by making it redundant; the other consists of a frontal attack on the stereotype itself by focusing on its diffusion dynamics.

The first approach builds on the observation that the more specific the object of evaluation, the closer the evaluation reflects the object and the less impact of the stereotype. Bureaucrats have a negative image, while teachers, nurses and fire fighters are more valued. If one changes one's identity from a civil servant in the Ministry of Public Works to an airport designing engineer or from health bureaucrat to hospital manager or doctor (even when this doctor is only involved in administrative tasks and not practicing medicine), the public appreciation increases. Then there is no longer a Federal Government organizing productivity, but instead a consortium of very specific "Agencies for..." (see also Dubnick and Justice, 2002).

Such an approach does not actually change the stereotype; it simply removes a number of professions and institutes from the headers "bureaucrat" or "government" and is, therefore, a defensive reaction. Though this strategy is useful, there remain professions and agencies that do not qualify for this exemption. The emptying of these categories may result in a rest-category filled with bureaucrats and administrations dealing with coordination, general policy preparation, ceremonial functions, etc., thereby actually strengthening the stereotype because of the lack of concreteness of their tasks. However, the most important argument against this approach is the possible loss of a collective governmental identity and esprit de corps among civil servants. The creation of multiple crosscutting identities undermines the previously existing single dominant image.

The second approach for challenging the negative stereotype focuses on the dynamics of diffusion and preservation. It tries to remove the constraints for expressing ideas in a contra-stereotypical way by creating a new dominant image. This approach requires a government to play an active role, because it must dominate the public discourse. Civil servant arch-types featured in television series have to radiate a positive image. Actual civil servants must refrain from publicly discussing the tedious characteristics of their jobs, and politicians should refrain from bureaucratic bashing. Massive communication on modernization and quality improvement initiatives may also contribute to this end. Unfortunately, government's potential impact on most of these aspects is rather limited, and the need for a domination of the discourse implies that scattered initiatives will not generate the desired result. According to the stereotype theory, they will be disregarded as exceptions to the general rule. Nevertheless, governments can train their staff; they can attempt to make politicians aware of the consequences of their words.

This approach would be rather unprecedented but not necessarily impossible. With regard to campaigns against drunk-driving, Dearing and Rogers offer the example of initiators who were able to convince Hollywood to include designated drivers into their television series. In a similar plan of action, politicians refuse to be photographed while smoking, because they are concerned about the message this habit sends to young people. A social engineering process can be time-consuming, and results may not come immediately. Such an approach is likely to encounter resistance because of democratic concerns. The boundary between honest communication and propaganda is often blurred, and social engineering initiatives may create an atmosphere in which critical comments are more damaging than before.

## **Conclusion**

Citizens' evaluation of government and public administration is largely based on pre-existing images. Perceptions are not only based on facts, but also on stereotypes. Observations then become supposition instead of fact-driven. The main characteristic of stereotypes of bureaucrats is, as in all stereotypes, generalization: opinions and statements never demonstrate a concrete foundation. Whether or not these stereotypes have a strong impact on assessments depends on the context. The most common prime referential framework for formulating an opinion is the negative stereotype of bureaucrats while factual information and concrete aspects are required.

Research has focused on the nature and content of these labels. However, it often failed to address the issue of the persistence of stereotypes despite contradictory information. We have tried to express the tendency of the content of stereotypes to become a social norm and how social pressure can stimulate people to express themselves in a way



consistent with the stereotype. In the final part of the article, we have outlined two strategies for administrations to alter dominant negative images. The first strategy stresses the creation of new identities, which allows opinions to become more specific. The potential scope of the stereotype is limited, but the stereotype itself is not changed. The second strategy focuses on the channels for diffusion and persistence of the stereotype. By dominating these channels, it is possible to change the content of the stereotype or at least to make divergence from it easier by making the stereotype less dominant in discourse.

This article takes governments' preference for creating a more positive image of the public administration as an implicit assumption. Citizens' negative attitudes towards government and public administration have an undeniable impact on their behavior, such as paying taxes and obeying the law and on their general willingness to comply (Tyler and Huo, 2002; Levi, 1996). Stereotypes also have their merits. Negative framing of bureaucrats has certainly contributed to support for recent administrative reforms. In the pressure for these reforms, realities and images or symbols are intrinsically linked, and the latter often have a creative effect. There is growing attention for the importance and merits of symbols and rhetoric in public administration (Farmer and Patterson, 2003). Harmonizing reality and image is perhaps not only impossible, but also not entirely desirable.

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# Children's Stories and the Quantum Administrator

*Alexander A. Dawoody*

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## **Introduction**

Children's literature is a conscious reflection of our interactions with the world. It is raw testimony to the construction of our world and what goes into the composition of that world. By identifying themes within children's literature and tracing these themes' analogous relations with public administration, we are able to better understand the world as a whole and particularly public administration as complex systems of relationships.

There is an interconnected relationship between children's stories and the complex, non-linear world of public administration. These relationships are reflected in themes and meanings embedded in the same children's stories. In order to observe these relationships outside the logical linear interpretation, we need to construct an analogues link between themes derived from children's literature and concepts derived from the theory and practice of public administration. The nexus between the themes from children's stories and concepts from the theory and practice of public administration are, at the same time, part of the web of relationships that compose the complex chaotic and quantum world of public administration as a whole.

Children's stories are not autonomous entities specific to certain culture, time or place. Autonomy, especially in children's literature, is not the property of any particular culture. Members of different cultures may have different beliefs. These beliefs may be reflected in children's stories as well. The world is an interconnected web of relationships; therefore, children's stories are, by necessity, part of one holistic universal culture, despite their local flavor and specificity.

Children's stories are not closed and windowless units. They interact with other forms of literature and human cognition and become part of our holistic perspective in life. Whenever a particular children's story is unwilling to find a nexus for its interconnection with the outer world, it will wither within its local limitations and fade away as a failed cognitive representative of the universal human experience.

There are many differences in our experiences that attribute to diversity in our cultural literature, especially in our children's literature. Interpretations are generated among variations of our cultural traditions. However, cultural changes reflected in children's literature are insightful of our cultural differences as well as our cross-cultural relationships.

Children's literature does not exist independent of man's universal interconnected experiences. Children's literature is the product of humanity and has a universal dimension that extends beyond temporal and spatial elements. Children's literature is the product of the dynamic interrelated web of relationships in the world, which includes public administration.

Children's literature is unique to humanity as a specific form of cognitive expression. This expressive, cognitive language is what distinguishes man from other species on earth. However, children's literature is not the type of linguistic expression that holds certain semantics rules or syntax. Rather, it is a special form of articulation that is not confined to specific rules. Children's literature is the direct expression of human experience through aesthetic representation that reflects the particularity of time, place and culture, while extending beyond these particularities at the same time.

Thus, children's literature is universal and has no cultural boundaries. Its particularity may remain specific to certain time, place and culture, but its themes and symbolism extend beyond time, place and culture and will emerge as collective of our conscious expression of a holistic world that includes public administration.

The complex (quantum/chaotic) administrator is one whose vision of life is undergoing a radical change toward the multiple. The world of the complex administration as a pluralistic universe has a complex character, whereby structures within that world may not only disappear, but also appear, moving cyclically from equilibrium to non-equilibrium to equilibrium in order to produce the new within the web of universal relations.

Events in the complex world of public administration are historical, temporal and dynamic. Yet, they are also non-linear, unstable and contain within them the seeds of change and uncertainty. These characteristics are the conditions for public administration's evolution and phase shifts to self-organize and produce fitting orders.

The analogous value of applying the complexity theories of chaos and quantum theories to the interpretation of the relationships between children's literature and public administration will enhance our understanding of the world itself as a web of associations. This perspective is a departure from the traditions of observing human phenomenology within fixed time and place and according to linear and rational observation.

All linguistic terms belong to human cognition (Morcol, 1999). We are no longer constrained by a single ontological model dependent on correspondence as the meaning we attribute to an entity or event (Evans, 1999). Truth can now be seen not as an attribute inherent in an entity or event, but as the meaning we attribute to that entity or event. We are shifting from absolute truth to approximate descriptions (Evans, 1999).

The complex world of public administration is a world of nonlinear relationships. Changes in these relationships are subject to conditions in which changes are amplified, breaking up existing structures and behavior and creating unexpected outcomes in the generation of new structure and behavior (Elliot and Kiel, 1996).

Reality is revealed to the complex administrator through an active construction in which he participates. The world becomes an open system that has the capacity to respond to change and disorder (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). Therefore, themes derived from children's literature can be used analogously in order to interpret the relationships between children's literature and the dynamic world of the complex administrator.

## **Themes, Concepts and Complexity**

Let us arbitrarily select three children's stories from various cultures and identify the themes and embedded meaning within them. Then, observe these themes' relations with concepts specific to the theory and practice of public administration. The emerging relationships between the themes and the concepts are the basis for interconnected dynamics between children's literature and public administration as observed through the lenses of complexity theories of chaos and quantum theories.

### **The First Story**

Our first story is found in the narratives of the New Testament. A man and his two sons are the subjects of a parable in Luke 15:11-32. The father decides to divide his wealth equally between his two sons. The older son takes his inheritance and moves to another city, whereby he lives and spends his money irresponsibly and selfishly. The

younger son receives his inheritance from his father, but decides not to leave. He continues working on his father's farm, sharing the fruits of his labor with his family.

One day, the older son returns home penniless and ashamed. As his father observes him approaching from a distance, he asks his younger son to prepare a large feast to celebrate the return of his brother. The younger son becomes angry, not knowing why his father is welcoming his older brother with such enthusiasm, considering his behavior. He asks his father why he did not seem to appreciate him as much as his foolish brother? His father answers that his younger son was always with him in his heart, but his older son was lost but now found again.

Several themes that are relevant to concepts in public administration can be identified in this story. The action of the father dividing his wealth amongst his sons is parallel to the concept of the welfare/nanny state in public administration. When the state acts in a capacity of redistributing and allocating resources, it is functioning as a father figure distributing his wealth to his children. Similarly, when an organization begins a new line of productivity or operation without prior testing of the marketplace, it is acting as the older son in the story, moving to a new city and spending his inheritance without planning. The father's delegation of power to his older son to meet his own needs is similar to Lowi's interest group liberalism, whereby power is designated by delegation intended to meet the need of an established group.

This theme describes a change within a dynamic system that is experiencing phase shift and re-ordering of its structure. Phase shift and the emerging of new order through the process of re-organization are the properties of complex dynamics (Ding, 1997). The father's decision to divide his inheritance between his two sons is comparable to a phase shift within the structure of a system that composed an order no longer able to continue as before, as a cooperative association between the father and his two sons. The environmental changes in the villages where the three had lived, along with internal mechanisms and needs of the system's three main components, the father and his two sons, required a phase shift toward the new.

The second theme is the theme of the older son venturing out on his own. In addition to the concepts of privatization, the older son's privatizing the portion of his father's wealth that he had inherited, and the concept of decentralization, the older son's breaking away from his father's centralized and authoritative organizational structure, this theme also is parallel to the concepts of horizontal structure and horizontal function. The analogy between the concepts of horizontal structure and horizontal function and the theme of the older son's venturing out on his own can be traced in the horizontal movement of the older son and his breaking away from the central structure of his father (Peters, 1999). Remaining within his father's older structure, however, is an example of a vertical movement, such as that of the younger son.

This idea also embodies meaning that is related to concepts such as the Article of Confederation of 1776, state's rights vs. federal rights, the science of muddling through, root approach, dualism, John Locke's *Acquisition* doctrine, line item budgeting and total resource sacristy. The Article of Confederation of 1776 is a translation of a loose union between fragmented parts, and its collapse represents the breakdown of a dysfunctional union not unlike the relationship between the father and his sons (Stillman, 1999). The older son's venturing out represented the end of that faulty union and the need for new emergence that is based on a new order, norm and restructuring.

We can trace similar analogy between this theme and the concept of state's rights vs. federal rights. State's rights vs. federal rights controversy reflects the symbolism in the theme of the older son's struggle to establish his own justification by moving a way from his family (Stillman, 1999). The state (the older son) is in constant turmoil to establish its own right in opposition to the dominant federal power (the father).

Federalism and the notion of federal laws taking precedent over state laws, as well as Taylor's one best way concept, can be represented in the younger son's rejection to the continuation of his father's way of association (Peters, 1999; Koritansky 1999). Dualism in public administration calls for the clash of polar opposites and the dialectical victory of one idea or practice over another (Wilson, 1887/1999). It is similar to the older son's behavior that clashes with his father's older cooperative structure. The result was the defeat of the son's experimental venture and the triumph of his father's associative relations.

The duality between the older son's venturing alone versus his father's older structure reflects Lindblom's root approach of comprehensive methods of enabling the means to achieve the end, instead of the traditional incremental changes that sustain an order, but with modified and gradual improvements. The branch approach in Lindblom's

science of muddling through is exhibited in the younger son's decision to remain within his father's older structure and incrementally move forward (Lindblom, 1959/1981).

The older son's endeavor alone is the essence of individualism and acquisition, both regarded by John Locke as fundamental in the matter of liberty and in constructing a government by consent. John Locke's principle idea of acquisitiveness, which became one of the characteristics of the American regime's values, is a translation of the older son's yearning for individual prosperity, regardless of his failed venture (Richardson, 1997).

The theme also corresponds to line item budgeting, whereby each program is assessed individually and allocated the funding needed, as the older son's scheme was assessed and funded according to his needs. Total resource scarcity in budgeting is where available funds do not cover existing programs. It is equivalent to the older son's wasting of his money and having no available resources to fund his life style.

Collectively, these concepts are elements of a system responding to changes in the environment. These changes are creating a state of oscillation and disorder that is leading to disequilibrium. The following state is the reshuffling of the older order and the process of re-organization through the collapse of the older order and the emergence of a new dynamics, new order and a new equilibrium.

The third theme is the theme of the younger son remaining with his father and moving vertically within his father's older hierarchical system. The younger son's vertical movement is comparable to the concept of vertical structure in an organization (Peters, 1999).

The younger son's decision to remain with his father and conserve his inheritance is parallel to the concept of maintaining bureaucratic order as a rational system of organization. The theme also echoes the characteristics of the leader as a conservator, Simon's view of organization as bounded rational spheres and logic and Gulick's POSDCoRB with its emphasis on planning, organization, staffing, directing, coordination, reporting and budgeting (Terry, 1995; Kaufman, 1956/1999). All these elements were lacking in the older son's venturing alone.

In theme two, the older son played the role of a fiscal advocate. In theme three, the younger son played the role of a fiscal guardian. The younger son's strategy reflects the characteristics of Program Performance Budget. The strategy was also equivalent to the concept of relaxed resource scarcity, whereby resources are sufficient to cover existing needs and incremental increase (Mikesell, 1999).

With the phase shift, a transition occurred within the system that changed its internal structure. The older son's departure and the younger son's assumption of responsibility, taking on the tasks that his older brother had relinquished, revealed a transition in the older system of association that was constructed by the father and his two sons in the past.

This internal evolution in the system and its response to environmental stimulus created a state of imbalance (Morgan, 1986). An oscillation and reshuffling occurred in the system. The collapse of the older system became necessary, yet elements within the system resisted breakdown. Once the older son's venture failed, the system eventually collapsed. The chaotic behavior within the system then produced a new organization and a new order when the older son returned to his father's home. The emerging new order had no precedence, and the new association between the father and his two sons were of a new order and function.

The fourth theme of the older son returning home a failure can be likened to the concept of recycling. It also represents the collapse of the older structure. The fifth theme of the father welcoming the older son home represents a symbolic analogy with the concepts of judicial activism and instrumentalism (Stillman, 1999).

The fifth theme shifts the emphasis from objects to events, from building blocks to a web of association between the father and his two sons without money being a factor in the connection. Interconnectedness is the property of a quantum world of association (Dennard, 1996). This interconnectedness may experience some resistance to change and may attempt to avoid the collapse of the older structure (Brem, 1999). Eventually, the older structure will collapse, and a new order will emerge that is better capable to deal with the environment (Little, 1999). The theme of a father embracing his older son's return home also translates the notions of experience-based knowledge and the concept of lived knowledge (Drucker, 1999; King and Stivers, 1998).

An analogy also could be made between the father's welcoming his older son's returning home with the concepts of public spirit that emphasizes non-material needs over economic elements (Kelman, 1987). The theme translates the concept of system theory as well. System theory's use of systems as models is analogous to the models of various systems of operation that were used in this story in order to arrive to the most functional and successful one (Stillman, 1999).

The sixth theme is the theme of the younger son complaining about lack of self-recognition by his father to his work and sacrifices. This element is a reflection of the need for the unity of command and an authoritative type of leadership. Such leadership is to be recognized through the younger son's need to be validated by an authoritative figure, such as his father, in order to gain satisfaction in his performance. The voluntary acknowledgement of authoritative power of leadership is an indicator of the role of power in such types of leaderships (Berle, 1969). The theme and the consequences decentralization of authority between the father and his two sons echo the concept of market government and reforming monopoly through decentralization (Peters, 1996).

The seventh theme is the final theme in the story. It represents the father's eternal, unspoken love and appreciation for his younger son. This theme corresponds to the concept of unpronounced cooperation and association within an organization, the gag rule and the deregulated model of government (Truman, 1960; Koritansky, 1999; Peters, 1996). The father's understood love for his younger son did not follow any established rule. It may appear as taboo or gag, but it was the underlining method in a deregulated organization.

Once the system collapsed due to the chaotic behavior that it generated through its internal processes of re-ordering, the new emerging order was more capable in dealing with the conditions of the environment (Wheatley, 1999). The new order of the older son's returning to his father and younger brother's association accepts the older son in spite of his inability to financially contribute to the association. The father and older son have no money, and the younger son possesses the only remaining wealth. All three are now engaging in a cooperative measure to form a new structure; a new equilibrium was born that seemed better able to deal with the requirement of the environment.

The older system of the father having money, his two sons not having money and all three engaging in a network of association had to experience turbulence and a period of reshuffling of order, especially with the father dividing his wealth between his two sons with two different associations. This transitional reshuffling of the previous order caused the system to collapse and give birth to a new order. The new arrangement consists of the father and the older son having no money, yet they and the younger son are equally engaged in a network of association. The randomness of this arrangement made the chaotic behavior within the system unpredictable and irrational, but it was the needed response to the dynamics of change within and outside the system itself.

Table 1 illustrates these themes and their relations to concepts in public policy and administration, and the interpretation of these relations according to the complexity theories of chaos and quantum mechanics.

## **The Second Story**

Cinderella lives with a jealous stepmother and two equally petty and heartless stepsisters. She is forced to do all the housework alone. After her stepmother and stepsisters leave to attend a ball at the handsome prince's palace, Cinderella's fairy godmother is able to provide her with a magical carriage and a gown fit for a princess. Her only restriction is that she must leave the ball before midnight.

Once she arrives at the palace, she catches the prince's attention. As midnight approaches, Cinderella remembers that she must leave. In her haste she leaves one of her shoes in the castle and returns home to her dirty clothes and humble work. The prince began a search for her, using her shoe both as evidence and a guide. The story ends with the prince finding Cinderella and marrying her.

As in the previous Bible story, the themes in the *Cinderella* are analogous to concepts in public administration. Instead of going through each of the story's themes and establishing their relation to concepts in public administration, let us describe the ontological picture of the themes. The specific concepts and themes, nevertheless, are illustrated in Table 2.



**Table 1: Themes Derived From the Bible Story and Their Analogous Relationships to Concepts in Public Administration**

Themes Derived from the Story	Concepts in Public Administration Related to the Themes in the Story	Interpreting the Relationships Between the Themes and Concepts According to Chaos and Quantum Mechanics
Father dividing his wealth among his sons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The welfare/nanny state</li> <li>• Interest group liberalism</li> <li>• Privatization</li> <li>• Decentralization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systemic evolution</li> </ul>
Older son venturing out on his own and spending his inheritance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk taking and innovation without market test</li> <li>• The horizontal structure in administrative function</li> <li>• The Article of Confederation of 1776</li> <li>• State's rights vs. federal rights and federal laws superceding state laws</li> <li>• The science of muddling through, root approach</li> <li>• Dualism</li> <li>• John Locke's Acquisition doctrine</li> <li>• Line item budgeting</li> <li>• Total resource scarcity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The system is responding to environmental changes.</li> </ul>
Younger son remaining with his father, conservative with his inheritance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The leader as a conservator</li> <li>• Bureaucracy as a rational system of organization</li> <li>• The vertical structure in administrative structure</li> <li>• Simon's bounded rationality</li> <li>• POSDCoRB</li> <li>• The science of muddling through, the branch approach</li> <li>• One best way</li> <li>• Program Performance Budget</li> <li>• Relaxed resource scarcity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The system's older structure is resisting collapse.</li> </ul>
Older son returning home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recycling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systemic collapse</li> </ul>
Father welcoming the older son's return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judicial activism</li> <li>• Instrumentalism</li> <li>• Public spirit</li> <li>• System theory</li> <li>• Experience-based knowledge</li> <li>• Lived knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interconnectedness</li> </ul>
Younger son complaining about lack of recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unity of command</li> <li>• Authoritative leadership</li> <li>• Market government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System resisting change</li> </ul>
Father always has his younger son at heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization theory</li> <li>• Gag rule</li> <li>• Deregulated government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The holistic universe</li> </ul>

*Cinderella* is an emphasis on performance-based organization, rule structure, associative influence and dynamics, servant-leadership quality and the process of transforming an idea into a procedure. The stepmother and her daughters' jealousy, their seeking of recognition in participating in an associative measure of networking in society and the forcing of Cinderella to work alone in the house are similar to concepts such as bad rules in an organization and the over-regulated organization (King and Stivers, 1998).

Cinderella's lack of opportunity to participate in the ball, but to be rewarded for her dedication and hard work is parallel to the concept of unfunded mandate. Unfunded mandate is a concept whereby a piece of legislation is worthy for consideration but is unfunded (Peters, 1999).

The theme of leaving Cinderella behind at home and denying her the opportunity to participate in the ball is also analogous to the concept of hierarchical structure within an organizational decision-making process; decisions are made at the top without input or participatory dynamics (Peters, 1996). The theme translates the politics of interest groups as the stepmother and her two daughters acting in the capacity of an interest group, advocating only for their own specific agenda (Truman, 1960).

Cinderella's subservient labor is akin to the concept of servant leadership; the leader is a servant first and leads by example. The theme also translates the concepts of flexible and participatory governments of a virtual organization (Greenleaf, 1977; Peters, 1996).

The ball as a theme is comparable to Schmidt's concept of flattery vs. reward (Koritansky, 1999). The theme of the magical transformation of Cinderella to a princess is the an expression of the importance of myth and shared beliefs within an organization. Myth plays a significant role in the construction of the American regime (Richardson, 1997).

The prince's charisma is a direct parallel to the concept of charismatic leader (Berle, 1969). His search for Cinderella is reflective of the concept of street-level leadership (Vinzant, 1998). The recognition of Cinderella's beauty, work and characteristics by her fairy-godmother and the prince is related to the concept of pluralism as advocated by Waldo and Follett; truth is held by no single approach (Stillman, 1999). The administrative figure in the story (the prince) and his specific methodology in searching for Cinderella by using her shoe is equivalent to Leonard White's theory that public administration is an art that is becoming a science (Storing, 1965/ 1999).

*Cinderella* depicts a system that is going through different stages of development. The system is observed first at the state of equilibrium. The order and structure during that stage is that of Cinderella working while her stepmother and her two stepsisters are not working.

The system reacts to environmental changes as the stepmother and her two daughters attempt to attend the ball at the prince's palace. The possibility of Cinderella attending the ball threatened the system, and its existing structure collapses. Denying Cinderella the opportunity to participate in the ball represents a form of artificial engineering or folly politics in order to delay the system's eventual downfall.

Through the magic of Cinderella's quantum leap into the status of a princess, the system entered into the state of chaos through a process of phase shifting. The mutual causality between the system's internal dynamics as Cinderella turns into a princess and the environmental impact of the ball event eventually led to the system's collapse. Chaos produces a new order. The older structure collapsed. Cinderella is no longer the sole, unappreciated worker in the house. She and the prince become engaged in a new association, while her stepmother and her stepsisters are forced to do their housework without Cinderella.

Table 2 illustrates these themes and their relations to concepts in public policy and administration and the interpretation of these relations according to the complexity theories of chaos and quantum mechanics.

**Table 2: Themes Derived From the Cinderella Story and Their Analogous Relationships to Concepts in Public Administration**

Themes Derived from the Story	Concepts in Public Administration Related to the Themes in the Story	Interpreting the Relationships Between the Themes and Concepts According to Chaos and Quantum mechanics
Only Cinderella is working in the house.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Servant leadership</li> <li>• Flexible government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The system is preparing for chaos at the state of near-equilibrium.</li> </ul>
The stepmother and her daughters are jealous of Cinderella.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competition</li> <li>• Constraining rules in an organization</li> <li>• Over-regulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Folly politics are preventing change and the eventual collapse of the system.</li> </ul>
A ball is taking place at the prince's castle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flattery vs. reward</li> <li>• Association and group theory</li> <li>• Participatory government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The illustration of the wave of energy in a quantum web of association</li> </ul>
Only the stepmother and her daughters are going to the ball, leaving Cinderella at home and working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unfunded mandate</li> <li>• Interest group</li> <li>• Hierarchy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artificial engineering to avoid the natural collapse of the system</li> </ul>
Magic provides Cinderella with means to go to the ball.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myth and shared beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quantum leap</li> </ul>
Cinderella dances with the prince.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charisma</li> <li>• Agenda setting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual causality</li> </ul>
Midnight deadline for Cinderella to return home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Meeting deadlines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The characteristics of a temporal phenomenon/event</li> </ul>
Cinderella leaves her shoes behind.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due process</li> <li>• Administration is an art that is becoming a science.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collapse dynamics</li> </ul>
The prince searches for Cinderella, using her shoe as guide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy</li> <li>• Street-level leadership</li> <li>• Pluralism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entropy and the beginning of the process of re-ordering</li> </ul>
The prince finds Cinderella.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance budget</li> <li>• MBO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergence</li> </ul>

### The Third Story

*Beauty and the Beast* begins with the depiction of a poor family that lives in a village cursed with famine. Nearby the village a wealthy man lives in a palace, cursed not by famine, but by physical deformity. Because of his deformity, the wealthy man avoids being seen in public.

To save themselves from starvation, the poor family in the village agrees to send one of its daughters to the palace to live with the deformed man in exchange for food. After she moves in, the village girl begins to develop a relationship with the deformed man from a distance. She knows his character, but she is still unaware of his appearance.

The village girl respects and enjoys the man's good nature and kindness. She asks him to reveal himself to her, because she is no longer concerned with his deformity.

Once the deformed man shows himself, the village girl is overwhelmed by his appearance. She is unable to accept living with him and requests to return to her village. He honors her wish and allows her to return to her village.

After arriving to her village and reliving with her family, the village girl reassessed her experience with the deformed man. She realized that she misjudged him by allowing her negative reaction to his physical deformity to distort her favorite opinion of his good nature. Character mattered more than physical appearance. Thus, she decided to return to the castle and lived with the deformed man per her own choice. The village girl's recognition of the deformed man's good character and her acceptance of him despite of his physical deformity then removed the curse from the deformed man and he regained his original appearance. Together, they reconstituted their relationships with the village based on cooperation.

The theme of a wealthy man living in a castle while an entire village is economically suffering because of famine is analogous to the concept of social Darwinism (Koritansky, 1999). The separation of the wealthy, deformed man from the villagers is alienating him, as an administrator from having a direct relationship with the public, knowing their needs and design a policy that is in coordination with their aspirations and inputs. The separation between the administrative capacity of the wealthy, deformed man and the proper conditioning of politicking is analogous to Goodnow's dichotomy of politics and administration (Stillman, 1999).

The separation also creates an absence of a participatory government and has negative consequences both for the villagers who end up living in poverty, and the wealthy, deformed man who ends up living alone. Without a relationship with the public, the administrator is unable to translate their needs. Politics is thus removed from its natural arena and separated from its proper administration.

The villagers' decision to send one of their daughters to live in the castle in exchange for food is analogous to the Hobbesian notion of social contract. The villagers entered a social contract with the sovereign, surrendering some of their privileges and rights (the young girl's freedom) in exchange for food as a means for their society to sustain (Hobbes, 1996).

The village girl's recognition of the deformed man's good nature and character, her subsequent ability to help her village economically through him, and the deformed man's new reputation as a kind man is analogous to the concept of regime values as envisioned by the Founders, such as character, acquisition, and reputation (Richardson, 1997).

The theme of the village girl's admiration of the deformed man's good nature but rejecting living with him once he revealed himself physically to her is analogous to the concept of citizens' ambivalence toward taxation. The taxpayers accept taxation as an idea when the revenues are paying for programs and services, but it is regarded as a necessary evil since it results in taking money from the taxpayers' pockets (Mikesell, 1999). The theme is also analogous to the concept of downsizing. Members within an organization may accept the rationale and need for downsizing, but when they are the ones who are impacted by it they reject or dislike it.

The theme of the village girl's return to the village is analogous to the concepts of grass root politics and the locality of politics as all politics being local. The theme of the village girl's return to the castle and acceptance of the deformed man's physical deformity, and the care for one another and subsequently for the village is analogous to the concepts of symbolism (Edelman, 1967) and Heidegger's concept of care. One's awareness of his existence is not an abstract notion but a concept of being-in-the-world. Care is the attentiveness or concern that enables one to orient himself toward others (King and Stivers, 1998).

Observing these themes collectively according to the theories of chaos and quantum mechanics will enable us to signify the impact of the interconnectedness in the formation the web of associations within a particular system's environment, and the impact of that environment on the internal evolution of the system itself. The story begins with a system is at a state of equilibrium. The structure during that state is composed of a deformed, wealthy man living alone in his castle and economically suffering villagers are living in a village. Then, a phase shift occurs within the system, as the village girl accepts living in the castle in exchange for food for her village. The phase shift results in the system's oscillation and instability. The instability further dissipates the system as the village girl returns to the village.

The village girl's return to the village as an autonomous figure, her interaction with the environments both in the castle and in the village, her consequence acceptance of the deformed man and returning to the castle are analogous to the concepts of heteropoietic systems. Heteropoietic systems are those systems where production of their components are autonomitized, but not autonomous, and changes occurs within systems as they interact with their environments (Little, 1999).

More instabilities and changes in the system were leading to more changes in the system's interaction with the environment and in its own self-organization. This is known as the process of positive feedback in a system's dynamics that accounts for changes in the system with more leading to more and less leading to less (Morgan, 1986).

When the village girl recognized the deformed man's special characteristics and good nature, yet she rejected living with him because of his physical deformity, she, in actuality, was translating the concept of dialectic. Dialectic is the clash of two opposites and the triumph of one pole over another (Morgan, 1986). The village girl's return to the village is the kick that started the process of bifurcation in the system chaotic behavior and the process of self-organization. This bifurcation then led to increased dissipation of the older structure, the collapse of the older order, and the emergence of a new order (Brem, 1999). The girl's return to the castle and her reunion with the deformed man, and the subsequent transformation in both symbolize such an emergence of a new order.

Table 3 illustrates the themes within this story and their relations to concepts in public policy and administration, and the interpretation of these relations according to the complexity theories of chaos and quantum mechanics.

## Conclusions

Public administration is part of our lives. Everything that we do on a daily basis, from reading a book, driving a car, watching television, preparing a meal, and so on involve some form of public policy and administration whether directly or indirectly. Public policy and administration thus is the vehicle that coordinates our daily activities within formats designed to make our life more meaningful and fulfilling. In essence, public administration and the principles of governance are what separate us as rational beings from other species that lack the cognitive capacity for self-governance and administration. There may exist species that engage in the mechanisms of resource allocation and administration. But these mechanisms are not the process of cognitive thinking. Instead, they are generic traits resulted through evolutionary periods of adaptations. Humans, on the other hand, are social animals capable to self-govern, administer, care, coordinate, reflect, and adapt to change in the environment through cognitive processes of thinking, analyzing, reasoning, and interacting within a holistic association.

When we observe the dynamic system of public administration, we are looking at a system that is nonlinear, with no emphasis on long-term prediction. In essence, we are looking at events through the evolution of phases. The entailments of this system spillover from one phase to another.

Systems change irreversibly. We can not exactly recreate the past. Yet, armed with knowledge of our past experiences, we are able to anticipate and prepare for change. As such, we must give up the bias that predictability, reversibility, and linear thinking may positively accentuated outcomes of change (Brem, 1999). As co-creators of our world, our perspectives have to be redefined and our senses of ourselves as human beings have to be enhanced. We need to see ourselves simultaneously as authors and readers of an unfolding text (Evans, 1999).

We convey our living experiences to our children by citing stories that embody themes and meanings of our interactions with the world. One of the elements in such interaction is public administration and its impact on our lives. Children's stories, in essence, are the translations of our experiences and perspectives as cognitive beings that are the co-creators of their world. The archetypal meanings within these stories are testimonies to our experiences as patterns of one holistic universe. Understanding children's stories and their themes as they relate to public administration and its concepts will bring us closer to the understanding of this holistic dynamics.

**Table 3: Themes Derived From The Beauty and the Beast Story and Their Analogous Relationships to Concepts in Public Administration**

Themes derived from the story	Concepts in public administration related to the themes in the story	Interpreting the relationships between the themes and concepts according to chaos and quantum mechanics
There is a famine in the village but a wealthy man living in a castle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Darwinism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The system is at a state of equilibrium within a specific order and structure</li> </ul>
The wealthy man is cursed with deformity, separated from the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politics/ administration dichotomy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The illustration of the system's internal dynamics</li> </ul>
The village girl accepts living with the wealthy, deformed man in exchange for food for her village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource management</li> <li>• Social contracts consensus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heteropoises and the system's interaction with its environment</li> </ul>
The village girl sees the inner beauty in the deformed man	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisition, character, and reputation as attributers of the American regime</li> <li>• Public choice theory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive feedback</li> </ul>
The village girl is unable to accept living with the deformed man despite his good nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taxation</li> <li>• Downsizing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialectic</li> </ul>
The village girl is leaving the castle and returning to the village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low voters turn out</li> <li>• Labor strikes</li> <li>• Grass root politics</li> <li>• All politics are local</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bifurcation</li> </ul>
The village girl self-corrects herself and returns to the castle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Consensus</li> <li>• Citizen vote</li> <li>• Democratic accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative feedback</li> </ul>
The deformed man is cured by the village girl's acceptance of him	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symbolism</li> <li>• Politics of care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New order/ equilibrium through Chaos</li> </ul>

## Glossary

**The Complex (Quantum/ Chaotic) Administrator:** The administrator who functions with no regard to fixed time and place. The complex (quantum/ chaotic) administrator is the one whose vision of life is undergoing a radical change toward the multiple. The world of the complex administration as a pluralistic universe has a complex character, whereby structures within that world may disappear, but also they may appear, moving cyclically from equilibrium to non-equilibrium, to equilibrium in order to produce the new within the interconnected web of universal associations.

**Bifurcation:** A vital element of self-organization, it involves the appearance of an additional pattern of behavior or sequence of states for a system when it passes a critical level of turbulence. Successive bifurcations generally double the value of a given parameter at each fork (Daneke, 1999).

**Causality:** A relationship between events or activities by which they are assumed to impact one another. Traditionally thought of as entailing spatial proximity and directionality (where one event is a cause and the other is

an effect), it can now include "remote" and "mutual" as well as extremely "weak" (as in "pink noise") versions (Daneke, 1999).

**Chaos:** It is a dynamical system exhibiting aperiodic behavior. While appearing to be random, its behavior is deterministic. Chaotic systems are highly sensitive to initial conditions, and/or points quickly diverge from a linear path (Daneke, 1999). Chaos is uncertain order. Chaos is not randomness or total disorder as the term is used in everyday speech; it does not take place far-from-equilibrium. Chaos in the technical sense of the term is the ordered but unpredictable pattern; more precisely, it is the intricate edge of the pattern. Chaos, then, takes place near-to-equilibrium (Newell, 1999).

**Complexity:** The study of the simple behavior of systems exhibiting complex patterns of interactions, which in turn result from simple rules and responses distorted through self-organizing processes (Daneke, 1999).

**Feedback:** One element of experience in a system influences the next. Feedback can be positive or negative. Together, these feedback mechanisms can explain why systems gain or preserve a given form, and how this can be elaborated and transformed over time (Morgan, 1986).

**Heteropoietic Systems:** Social systems in which the production of components occurs outside the system, rather than autopoietic systems that produce their own components. Heteropoietic social systems are autonomized, but not autonomous (Little, 1999).

**Holism:** The doctrine of holism is "the whole is often greater than the sum of its parts." It is based upon the assumptions that the whole is irreducible (its parts cannot be understood alone) and the whole is understandable within its complex, contextual elements (Daneke, 1999).

**Mutual causality:** It gives particular attention to the nature of relations and interconnections (Morgan, 1986).

**Negative feedback:** A change in a variable initiates changes in the opposite direction (Maruyama, in Morgan, 1986).

**Nonlinear:** The mathematical property of complex relationships among two or more elements interacting. Nonlinear behavior is typical of most natural and many social situations. Generally speaking, it means getting more than one bargained for (Daneke, 1999).

**Positive feedback:** When accounting for system change, more leads to more, and less lead to less (Maruyama, in Morgan, 1986).

**System:** It is holistic approach to problems of complex systems recognizing that the total system is greater in terms of variation than the simple sum of its parts (Daneke, 1999).

**Theme:** It refers to clusters of concepts with similar meanings that taken together refer to some issue.

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# A Narrative Approach to Identifying Some Underlying Problems in an Urban Hospital's Emergency Room

*Eric M. Eisenberg, Joan E. Pynes and Jay Baglia*

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There is a shortage of nurses in America. Congress recognized the seriousness of this problem when it passed the Nurse Reinvestment Act on July 22, 2002 to amend to the Public Health Service Act (H.R. 3487; S. 1864). The Act authorizes the following: National Nurse Service Corps Scholarship Program (SEC. 851); Nurse Recruitment Grant Program (SEC. 855); Public Awareness and Educational Campaign (SEC. 856); Grants for Career Ladder Programs (SEC. 857); Area Health Education Centers Program (SEC. 858); Grants for Nurse Training in Long-Term Care for the Elderly (SEC. 859); Grants for Internship and Residency Programs, (SEC. 860); Developing Retention Strategies and Best Practices in Nursing Staff Management (SEC. 861); Fast-Track Faculty Loan Program (SEC. 862); Stipend and Scholarship Program (Sec. 863) and a National Commission on the Recruitment and Retention of Nurses (SEC. 865).

Previously two reports from the United States General Accounting Office, *Nursing Workforce: Emerging Nurse Shortages Due to Multiple Factors* (2001a) and *Nursing Workforce: Multiple Factors Create Nurse Recruitment and Retention Problem* (2001b), identified some of the issues and trends that are exacerbating the crises in regard to the recruitment and retention of nurses. The nursing workforce is aging, and fewer new nurses are entering nursing programs to replace those that are leaving. The large number of RNs that entered the labor force in the 1970s are now over 40 years of age and are not being replenished by younger RNs. Incumbent nurses report dissatisfaction with staffing levels, heavy work loads, increased use of overtime, lack of sufficient support staff, and inadequate wages, (GAO 2001b, 6). The nursing crisis is anticipated to get worse. The demand for nurses will increase when the baby boomers reach age 60. The population of people aged 65 and older is projected to double between the years 2000 and 2030. During the same period of time the number of women between the ages of 25 and 54 who have traditionally become nurses is expected to remain relatively unchanged (GAO 2001b, 11).

A Study by the Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (FNHP 2001) indicated that while there is dissatisfaction with wages, wages were not the primary reason for turnover. A greater number of the nurses surveyed were concerned about the stress and physical demands of the job. The nurses were also dissatisfied with the low level of recognition they received from their employers (Dwyer and Fox 2000; FNHP 2000).

According to the American Hospital Association (AHA), U.S. hospitals have 126,000 nursing vacancies and it anticipates that the vacancy rate could triple over the next decade as baby boomers age. The nursing shortage has become so acute that states are recruiting nurses from other countries. The North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement

allows registered nurses to work in the U.S. under a "temporary" Trade NAFTA (TN) visa, renewable yearly without limit (Adcox 2002). Hospitals in New York State are recruiting nurses from Canada, while Florida hospitals are looking to the Philippines, England, Ireland, and the United Arab Emirates (Gibbs 2001).

While all areas of health care are facing problems associated with the shortage of nurses, emergency medicine has been hit especially hard. Emergency rooms today are for the most part undersized, understaffed, and mired in outdated operational procedures (Journal of Emergency Nursing 1999). Emergency rooms must compete with other health care facilities and services, and even nursing specialties within a hospital for qualified nursing staff (e.g. intensive care, maternity, surgery, cardiac care). Popular media outlets (like "60 minutes" and *U.S. News and World Report*) repeatedly run stories that feature individual mishaps resulting from ambulance diversion, emergency room overcrowding, and a shortage of qualified nurses ("Nursing shortage" 2002; Shapiro 2001; Stolberg 2002).

There is a growing uninsured population in the U.S. that uses the ER for primary care (Kilpatrick & Holsclaw 1995; Steinhauer 2000; U. S. General Accounting Office 2001a; 2001b). Many at-risk populations arrive at the door of emergency rooms. Mothers and infants without access to maternal or child health services, the chronically ill and disabled, persons with AIDS, individuals with mental illness, or with drug or alcohol addictions, suicidal or homicidal patients, victims of domestic violence, the homeless and recent immigrants often rely on emergency department services (American College of Emergency Physicians 1999). Given the difficulties that presently exist in recruiting and retaining nurses, health care administrators are called upon to step up their efforts to retain incumbent nurses and make their facilities uniquely attractive to prospective staff.

This article presents the results of an interdisciplinary partnership between an urban community hospital and university faculty from the disciplines of Communication and Public Administration. The hospital's department of emergency medicine was frustrated by decreasing employee morale, low patient satisfaction, increased patient and family complaints, and high management turnover, none of which is unique to this hospital. Traditional interventions based on employee climate surveys and consultant reports confirmed the existence of these problems but did little to expose or address their underlying dynamics.

All parties agreed that a more probing, qualitative approach had the potential of providing these kinds of in-depth insights. This study employed ethnographic methods to take a closer look at emergency medicine in an urban community hospital in the southeastern United States. The objective of this study was to gain a richer and more detailed understanding of the dynamics of emergency medicine than what had been obtained from previous studies. The study was approached from both a systems and culture perspective, with an explicit focus on organizational communication (Eisenberg & Goodall 2001). Organizational communication is the study of messages, information, meaning and symbolic activity that constitutes organizations and the meanings of organizational events (Putnam, Phillips, and Chapman 1999). From a systems perspective, we were looking for information flow and for any interdependencies among the different aspects of emergency medicine. We were especially attentive to the nature and permeability of boundaries in this setting (e.g., between physicians, nurses and technicians; and the departments of radiology, phlebotomy and registration).

From an organizational culture perspective, we listened for commonly repeated vocabulary, themes and stories, all of which may reflect underlying assumptions and values that characterize this hospital (Schein 1997). An examination of the social interactions that give shape to the system and culture often reveals why things happen the way they do, what provokes the attitudes and behaviors of staff, and *what kinds of interventions might be most effective in creating change*. We believed that a better understanding of how communication creates, maintains, and transforms this emergency department's system and culture might provide unique insights into its current challenges, and help to identify potential solutions.

While ethnography is not often used in public administration research or taught in most public administration curriculums, articles have appeared in *Public Administration Review* that reference the potential value in moving beyond empirical analysis. For example, in "Stories Citizens Tell and How Administrators Use Types of Knowledge," Herzog and Claunch (1997) described how managers used stories from a variety of sources to improve

communication with citizens, alter spending priorities, reverse policy decisions, and improve their interpersonal skills. Stories are a form of knowledge through which public administrators can expand their worlds and modify their definitions of reality (1997, 374).

Nalbandian reflects on his experience as a “pracademic” and notes that politicians and citizens communicate with each other through stories and anecdotes because stories convey symbols better than statistics and reports. “One of my biggest surprises as an elected official was the power of anecdotes over statistics in the public policy arguments of both citizens and elected officials” (1994, 532).

Hummel (1991) addressed the need for managers to encourage participants to help define a problem in an intersubjective way, through dialogue. He noted that problems often arise because individuals holding different roles or positions are committed to incompatible perspectives or world views. A purposeful effort at communication can lead participants to agree to respect each other’s definitions of the problem and develop a consensus that leads to a solution.

Most recently, Cunningham and Weschler (2002) noted that the skills, knowledge and theories most needed by staff are different than from those needed by line managers, whose jobs require them to deal with people effectively amidst highly uncertain situations. “Line managers operate in uncertain environments, where systems are unstable and constantly subject to change...Line managers need theory and learning experiences to deal with unstable environments. Reconstructed theory on organizational behavior and development, effective communication, negotiation, and interpersonal problem solving are relevant (106)”.

## **Data and Methods**

The urban community hospital selected for this study (which we will call “HHC”, a pseudonym) opened in 1968 and has grown rapidly ever since. The number of patients seen by the emergency room (ER) has increased from 11,000 in 1973 to over 65,000 today. Patients are a broad cross-section of society, representing every age, income, and ethnic group. Recently, the CEO of the hospital has publicly recognized that over half of hospital admissions come through the ER, and consequently that it is a “front door” to the hospital. For this reason, efforts are being made to improve its appearance and overall effectiveness. Emergency physician services are contracted to a doctor’s group that has been overseeing the ER for 15 years.

After obtaining approval for the study from the university’s institutional review board (IRB), we met with the Director and Nurse Managers of the ER to explain our methodology. Permission was granted by the hospital administration to observe the ER for six months, after which time we agreed to provide a summary narrative to them and to the ER staff. Once we had their approval, we attended department staff meetings, described what we would be doing, and answered questions about the study from the ER staff. Using accepted ethnographic procedures (i.e., visiting different days and times of day, remaining unobtrusive whenever possible, shadowing different individuals and roles, identifying informants and conducting informal interviews) the three members of our team conducted the observations, with one team member taking the lead. In total, we conducted over 100 hours of observations and produced approximately 50 pages of field notes.

Once the observations were complete, our research team met to review our field notes and to identify cultural themes and tensions. From these meetings we produced a narrative reflective of the HHC ER culture.

We then requested that the Director of the ER assemble an ad hoc group representative of all the various positions in the ER to review the narrative. In the course of a dedicated two-hour meeting, we presented it to them (read the narrative aloud) and solicited their feedback about what they felt we got right, wrong, or had omitted. Finally, we presented the revised narrative (see Figure One) to the executive team of the hospital in a similar fashion, emphasizing trends and ensuring employee confidentiality. Concurrent with our study, the Director of the ER hosted off-site meetings for all staff focusing on current ER challenges as well as ideas for improvement. Our summary narrative and the results of the off-site meetings were provided to a new task force charged with creating a detailed performance improvement plan for the ER.

**Figure One: HHC ER Narrative**

"The world shows up at our doorstep": The Tale of the  
HHC Emergency Department

*Some stories are great fun to tell and some are painful, and this one is a little bit of both. So you think you want to work in an emergency room? You had better be crazy, and then some. Nothing about this job is easy: not the patients, not their families, not dealing with the hospital administration. All EDs are having some version of this experience now; a recent issue of U.S. News and World Reports declared "ER in Crisis." Nurses everywhere are in short supply, and nurses who can work effectively in the emergency environment are even more rare. Each day it seems things get a little busier as we see more and more people coming through the door. Some primary care physicians are so overscheduled that they send their patients to the ER—where they sit and wait. The growing ranks of uninsured patients join them. Moreover, each person comes in with higher expectations for care and service than ever before. So we try to sort things out in triage, and then we send people to sit for hours in the waiting room where they get angrier each passing minute. And all it takes is one vocal angry person to enflame the mood of the entire waiting room.*

*But hold on—while surely true, this is sounding too negative. We chose to work here, after all, and there is something we love about the place. The best part of the job is when we get to use our training in dealing with "real" emergencies. Nothing feels better than rising to the occasion during a code and saving someone's life, to feel the adrenalin rush and the miraculous way we manage to work as a team in the midst of a crisis. This is when we are at our best, but how much of the job is this way? Not much. Unlike how it looks on television, the number of real emergent cases is dwarfed by a litany of minor injuries and complaints better seen in a clinic or doctor's office. It's called an "emergency room," but this is increasingly a misnomer—only a small percentage of what we deal with each day is truly emergent.*

*But it's not just the increased workload that is so hard to take—it's also the daily inequities and frustrations that have led many of our former colleagues to leave. Six nurse managers in three years? That should tell you something. The people here are good, but the institutional support is lacking. Like some insane ticket-taker, we just keep packing patients in the door, but we haven't developed an infrastructure to support these people who are counting on us—there's nowhere for them to go, no available beds in the hospital. It's not out of the ordinary that we have over half of our beds filled with patients on hold waiting to go upstairs. And the bed management system! There simply has to be a better, more automated way to track the availability of beds than the archaic paper system we use today.*

*Given this level of overcrowding, some of us wonder about the overall growth plan for the hospital. We are pleased to see resources going to grow the Women's Center and the Heart Institute, but we are concerned about our ability to provide comparable levels of care in the ER. In theory, patients who come to UCH through these newer centers will develop a lifelong relationship with the hospital, and will come to rely on us for all of their medical needs. But if they visit the ER, they will find a different situation from how they were treated elsewhere on campus; we are overcrowded, and understaffed. Like we've seen in other kinds of businesses, you can only invest selectively to a degree. At some point, sub-par service in one area begins to hurt the overall reputation of the institution.*

*If we had to rank-order our challenges in the ER, we would start with staffing, both ours and of the hospital overall. We know that every hospital is challenged to attract and retain staff, but we sometimes seem to struggle more than most. Is our compensation really competitive with other hospitals in the area? Are we being sufficiently strategic with our pay and benefits? It's hard to say. It seems to us that our competitors offer more attractive packages in many respects, including critical pay, signing bonuses, weekend bonuses, etc. In addition, so many nurses moving from regular staff to the flex pool has been a mixed bag for the department. In a perfect world, most of us would prefer to be permanent staff members, but the schedules and pay scales are different enough to make us reconsider. These days, you have to look out for yourself, so why not join the pool? But we know the managers struggle with staffing and the pay inequities this arrangement creates.*

*Another thing we are learning lately about staffing is that as much as we need people, hiring folks who truly aren't qualified to do ER work is worse than being short-staffed. While we appreciate the efforts on the part of HR and*

*administration to get us some help, the answer—at least in our area— won't be found in hiring less qualified employees.*

*Friends in other industries say that loyalty is dead, that everyone is an independent contractor these days, only out for him or herself. Health care professionals have felt something like this for a long time, but it's getting more pronounced these days. Some of this diminished loyalty has led to tensions among the nursing staff, mostly due to perceived inequities between permanent and flex-pool employees. But any tensions within the department pale in comparison to the isolation we often feel from the rest of the hospital. ER staff is a different breed, we feel, and we would never willingly learn about the social world of another department. We expect them to serve us better, but in truth we don't know very much about what they do and why they do it.*

*When a patient is scheduled to be admitted to the hospital, they can remain in the ER for hours or days either because there's no room upstairs and/or because our supporting departments—e.g., radiology, phlebotomy, and pharmacy—either won't, or more likely can't respond quickly. The support that they do provide doesn't approach our cases with the same sense of urgency that we feel they deserve. Most recently, the changes in radiology have been a serious challenge, jamming up the system and causing long delays. Worse yet, we're at the bottom of the bed list—available bed space upstairs isn't offered to our patients until other departments have had their bed demands met. These other departments get irritated with our demeanor and demands, but maybe if they understood our world, they would better understand why we react the way we do.*

*Perhaps other departments don't get us because we tend to wear our emotions on our sleeves. The ER is an emotional place, our patients (and their families) show up here on one of the worst days of their lives, and we have to take the heat. Truth be told, the kind of person who picks a career in the ER is pretty emotional too, willing and capable of dealing with other people's problems. So even more than most health professionals, we have created a climate that is emotionally high-pitched, and we tend to respond strongly to the feelings and actions of patients, their families, and our co-workers. Perhaps for this reason (and others), all too often we are seen as "bad guys" by the rest of the hospital, and it really hurts. Over the years, the ED has become a kind of "whipping boy" for UCH as a whole, as many of the hospital's employees lack the awareness that most of what become the hospital's problems ultimately begin here, on the front lines of emergent care. But we must take some of the responsibility; rather than take a pro-active stance in educating other departments, our attitude is fatalistic and resigned, i.e., "they don't treat us well now and it's not likely to improve."*

*A good example of our significant dependence on other departments is our endless pursuit of missing supplies. We spend too much time looking for supplies that have disappeared, like blood pressure cuffs, pillows, and IV poles. A range of supplies travels to the units, never to be heard from again. We don't have an effective system for making sure that needed supplies either stay in the rooms or, at the very least, are returned in a timely manner. We're doing better, although still not great, at stocking rooms—it's a boring job. We need to come up with a new procedure for doing this—perhaps with volunteers or assigned techs, like we did in the past?*

*Managing the emotions associated with our jobs is made even more difficult by the physical layout of the ER. Unlike some sites of emotional work (e.g., airplane cabins, hotels, doctors' offices) there are no "backstage" areas in the ER where we can collect ourselves and have more private conversations. Flight attendants cherish their meager galley space for a reason—it's easier to maintain a positive focus on customers when there is a backstage area available to let down one's guard from time to time. Because no such place exists in the ER, we may say and do things in the unit that could disturb others or violate their privacy; future remodels should consider adding such an area to facilitate our high-pressure emotional work.*

*If staffing and coordination among departments are our most obvious concerns, a less apparent challenge is the straight-line nature of our processes. While it's true that we are trying to get away from this, for the most part we still do one thing at a time, which means that much of the patient's waiting time is spent in anticipation of labs, x-rays, or a doctor (whether an on-call doctor's orders or the staff doctor's diagnosis). There's got to be a better way, some method for doing some things concurrently that would make us more efficient without compromising the quality of our decision-making. Linear processing makes us only as strong as our weakest link, such that any delay has the effect of holding up the whole works.*

*Part of our current challenge has to do with a history of inconsistent and sometimes less than effective leadership. Things have been better of late, but management turnover has left the department short of its potential. The bright spot in this picture has been our physicians group. As managers have come and gone, our doctors have been a source of great stability. We really do work as one team. And while we are aware of challenges their group has had with the hospital, we never once saw these concerns affect their clinical practice.*

*But it isn't fair to blame others for our present situation; the blame game is all too prevalent at UCH and gets us nowhere. True, we're tired, and it gets old being the hospital scapegoat. But things do seem to be getting better, and many of us are hopeful. We take great pride in the work that we do, and everyone in the department wants to do a good job. We haven't given up on wanting to improve, but it's not simply a matter of treating patients better (although we could always do more of this). Instead, we know that improved processes and better relationships with one other—both inside and with other departments at UCH—are the keys to our future success.*

*Respectfully Submitted,*

## **Applications and Implications**

As mentioned above, the composite cultural narrative was used by a newly formed interdisciplinary task force charged with creating baseline measures and implementing a number of targeted interventions in the ED. Some of the changes that occurred were a direct result of this study, and others reflected both our findings and ongoing efforts on the part of the Director, the Physicians Group, and the Nurse Educator. The changes that were the most apparent were as follows:

- Hiring of an additional (third) patient advocate
- Hiring of greeters to direct patients upon arrival to the ED<sup>2</sup>
- More timely physician communication with patients once brought back to treatment area
- New approach to room stocking in the morning
- Patient meal tickets made available during long delays
- Improved triage through continuing education
- More stable management team
- Meetings with Pharmacy and Phlebotomy to clarify expectations and improve interdepartmental understanding and support

Other problems have proved more difficult and have not been addressed systematically despite their inclusion in the narrative. Some of these more daunting challenges include:

- Overcrowding and bed holds
- Creating a “backstage” area for ED staff
- Locating missing supplies

One more global implication of this study is that the current “ER crisis” in America can usefully be conceived of as a crisis of communication. Directors of Emergency Departments are held accountable for factors that they cannot directly control. Moreover, it is impossible for any emergency department on its own to “fix” what is wrong with emergency medicine. Expecting them to do so is like expecting public schools to be solely responsible for children’s learning. This study revealed the ways that emergency medical care is an iterative, non-linear process that often violates patient expectations for service. Process improvement in emergency medicine will require an interdisciplinary team effort and commitment to dealing with difficult, systemic challenges. No one expects emergency care to be perfect, but improvements in communication could reduce errors and increase efficiency.

This study also has implications for the future use of qualitative methods, and in particular ethnography, for the study of health care processes. Many, if not most of the dynamics identified in this study could not be easily identified or understood through traditional social science methods like surveys and interviews, which mainly reflect

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<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, shortly after the greeters came aboard HHC was forced to layoff a number of employees; the newly hired greeters were first on the list.



people's attitudes and beliefs about their environment. In this case, these beliefs were well understood as a result of a number of traditional analyses that had been conducted in the past by consultants. What was different was our ability to observe the work directly over time, from the perspective of an informed outsider not associated with a particular professional perspective. The resultant narrative yielded fresh insights that were richly detailed and a better reflection of the emotional lived experience of both patients and employees.

In the increasingly complex, interdependent world in which health care services are delivered, meaningful change can only be achieved through strategic partnerships and interdisciplinary alliances focused upon a shared vision. Convening alliances of this kind requires both significant efforts at learning to work well with others and a cessation of blame. Emergency departments can and should lead the charge of transforming emergency medicine; but taking the lead doesn't mean coming up with changes in a vacuum, but instead mobilizing interdisciplinary partnerships to generate systems-level solutions. The emergency department can help coordinate these efforts and provide ongoing feedback to the hospital about the effectiveness of the changes. Once these solutions are identified, all departments and divisions should be expected to modify their practices in support of the overall change. Here, executive leadership is crucial.

### **Conclusion: Implications for Practitioners and Scholars**

Many important issues that surfaced in our study were upon closer inspection broader systems issues that just happened to show up in the ER. The administration was preparing to embark on a strategic planning cycle, and used the narrative as input to this process. In the end, we feel that our project and the cultural narrative we produced were effective both in improving ER employee reflexivity about their work processes and in calling attention to common patterns and issues in a way that allowed them to be addressed directly by management and employees.

To remain/ become relevant, public administration research must seek new ways of approaching problems and new ways of thinking (Cates 1979). Tables 1 & 2 provide examples of the type of data/ information obtained through previous studies of the ER.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the data presented in Table 2, the narrative reveals important insights and feelings held by the ER staff. The narrative allowed the hospital administrators to understand the experiences, beliefs and values of the ER personnel. The narrative provided perspectives and observations that have been either been concealed or ignored despite some obvious signs like the high turnover of ER management and other ER personnel.

The purpose of this article is to illustrate how qualitative research was able to share the perspectives of ER staff and provide important information to hospital decision-makers, where past quantitative methods had failed. Research methods courses in public administration curriculums should move beyond the emphasis of positivist empirical methods and integrate more qualitative research method skills. Lessons could be learned from disciplines such as Applied Anthropology, Sociology, Communication and Management (Organizational Behavior) that have been able to successfully integrate these approaches into their research practice.

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the propriety nature of the data from previous studies of the ER, only examples of the types of questions and the way data was presented is provided.

**Table 1**  
**Emergency Department Satisfaction Survey**

*Choice of Responses*

*Strongly Agree*  
*Agree*  
*Neither Agree Nor Disagree*  
*Strongly Disagree*  
*Don't Know/Can't Judge*

1. The work I do in the ER is meaningful to me.
  2. I have the skills I need to do my job.
  3. Overall I am satisfied with my current pay.
  4. I have received the training I needed to keep pace with the requirements of my job as these have changed.
  6. In general, I am satisfied with my job
  7. My immediate supervisor has good leadership skills.
  8. My immediate supervisor has good clinical skills.
  9. My supervisor looks out for the personal welfare of members of the ER.
  10. A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in the ER.
  11. The hospital does a good job communicating its policies and procedures.
  12. I am given enough time to do what is expected of me on my job.
  13. I believe the procedures for evaluating my performance are fair.
  14. I believe that ER staff are respected by the hospital administration.
  15. I believe the doctors communication clearly with the ER staff.
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Table 2

<b>Doctors and Other ER Staff Descriptive Statistics and Rank Order of Means</b>								
<b>Quality Culture Sections</b>	<b>Doctors</b>				<b>Other ER Staff</b>			
	<b>N=</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>N=</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Top Management Support for Quality	12	5.06	1.79	3	22	3.43	1.86	3
Strategic Planning	12	5	1.61	5	22	3.67	1.67	2
Customer Focus	12	5.21	1.53	1	22	3.84	1.63	1
Quality Training	12	4.68	1.86	8	22	4.16	1.96	8
Recognition	12	4.76	1.91	6	22	3.88	1.98	9
Empowerment and Involvement	12	5.18	1.8	2	22	3.31	1.96	4
Quality Improvement Teamwork	12	5	1.94	5	22	3.29	2.08	6
Measurement and Analysis	12	4.73	1.64	7	22	3.3	1.72	5
Quality Assurance	12	4.61	1.68	9	22	4.26	1.7	7
<b><u>Organizational Climate Sections</u></b>								
Leadership	12	5.42	1.82	7	22	4.74	1.98	6
Decision-Making	12	5.77	1.65	2	22	3.02	1.78	4
Communication	12	5.17	1.77	9	22	3.48	1.83	8
Goals	12	4.88	1.76	10	22	4.23	1.86	10
Creativity and Innovation	12	5.49	1.76	5	22	3.66	1.9	7
Teamwork	12	5.72	1.47	3	22	3.1	1.8	3
Training	12	5.47	1.65	6	22	4.79	1.87	5
Environment	12	5.7	1.38	4	22	3.14	1.52	1
Job Satisfaction	12	5.78	1.46	1	22	4.12	1.67	2
Labor Management	12	5.25	1.69	8	22	4.37	1.91	9
Likert Scale    1= strongly disagree    7= strongly agree								

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# Embracing e-Service

*Michael B. McNaughton*

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Commerce probably got its start thousands of years ago. Shortly after the caveman discovered that rocks were a valuable commodity, he realized that tools could be made from rocks by striking one against another. By experimentation he was able to make blunt tools for hammering and sharp edged tools for carving and hunting. We can imagine that the story continues as the caveman realizes that maybe instead of all of his tribe making tools for individual use, just maybe he would make tools and trade them to the other members of the tribe for other goods—perhaps food. It just happened, in this story, that many of the tribe's members would rather not be bothered with making tools and gladly traded other goods for the tools our craftsman had made. It was the dawn of a new age and the beginning of our story.

Over the next few years, our caveman—let's call him Org, had developed into a very successful businessperson. He had even expanded his line from the basic sharp stone and the basic blunt stone to two sizes of sharp stones and (yes you guessed it) two sizes of blunt stones. Org decided to call the lines large and small. Org enjoyed about one more year of success when his business started to fall off. He was unable to comprehend why people were no longer coming to his cave to trade their goods for his wonderful stones. Org decided to reduce the cost of the smaller line yet the customers still did not return to his cavefront store. Org, upon seeing a past customer, asked why he no longer shopped at Org's Cave of Stone. With a little prying from Org, the former customer finally confessed that he was buying his tools from DotOrg, a distant relative of Org. Org was amazed; not only did DotOrg have a wider variety of tools, she also sold her tools cave-to-cave. Org decided not to worry—he would expand his line of tools and bring back his loyal customers. Org decided that selling his tools cave-to-cave would take away precious tool making time and was not necessary—after all, cave-to-cave sales was only a fad and would not last. Fast-forwarding, we find Org out hunting and gathering his own food. His business did not survive another year. Org realized that cave-to-cave delivery of tools was more than just a fad; by the time Org started tool delivery, DotOrg had opened distribution caves and had a staff of tool distributors throughout tribes as far away as two miles. Org's lack of insight cost him the business, it was too late to play catch up, DotOrg had grasped the market. Org's business from his cavefront, business as usual, had led to his downfall.

Although the story of Org is a fictional piece, it is true that business as usual has led to the downfall of numerous companies. The successful companies and organizations are the ones that look for changing trends in the way customers, consumers, and citizens wish to do business. Although these changes are not always readily apparent, to ignore trends as only a fad can easily lead to dissatisfied consumers and citizens. There is always someone else waiting in the wings to provide a better way, a hot new way, to do business. E-government and e-commerce just happen to be two hot new trends. Governments and businesses that do not embrace services on the Internet will be destined to have dissatisfied citizens and consumers. And hunting and gathering to make ends meet is not as easy as it was during the time of Org.

The Internet has given governments an opportunity to provide citizens with a new way of doing business. The public sector can now provide real time information and provide a means for citizens to do business without leaving their cave, I mean homes. Constituents will balk at the thought of waiting in line to get what they need from the public sector. So it is not as simple as whether to use the Internet to provide services, but how to use the Internet to provide services.

The questions for governments are complex and many: Should we quit providing services in certain brick and mortar buildings and only provide services on the Internet? Should we use the Internet for information only and still direct the citizens to the buildings? Should we provide online services as well as continue with conventional methods of providing services? The list of questions could go on, and none of the answers are easy. But the reality of the Internet as a point of service is here today and governments must address it.

Government services through the Internet are already numerous and diversified. In Missouri, citizens will be able to pay parking tickets online by credit card (The GT National, 2000). In Arizona, a duplicate driver license or identification card is available online. The 2.9 million Arizona drivers can use the Internet to apply for a duplicate license when they change address or if the original license is lost or stolen (GT News, 2000). Arkansas has an online filing system for corporations. The secretary of state's Web site allows visitors to complete articles of incorporation forms, applications for fictitious names, and applications for certificates of authority (The GT National, 2000).

In many states, social service agencies are using the Internet to provide services to their clients. In Kansas, state residents can obtain benefit forms online, contact workers through e-mail, search for jobs over the Internet, and can qualify for unemployment insurance benefits through an interactive voice response system (Newcombe, 2000).

These are only a few of the stories of insightful e-government pioneers. There are numerous other state agencies either providing services on-line or preparing to provide services on-line. There are other agencies that have yet to take advantage of the power of the Internet or perhaps are only using the Internet as a Web site with on-line information directing citizens to brick and mortar service outlets.

The age of the Internet is not allowing us the same luxury of time that the Industrial Revolution provided. Blake Harris, editor of *Government Technology*, points out that "the Industrial Revolution had both positive and negative effects—requiring considerable time and both social and economic restructuring before they could be fully absorbed" (7). E-commerce and e-services is growing rapidly and changing the lives of governments, companies, organizations, and individuals rapidly. Those that are waiting on the sidelines, doing business as usual, will be too late and will be destined to chase after the Internet pioneers. Not unlike the story of Org and DotOrg, the true visionaries will shape the nature of e-government and e-commerce while the followers may be left out.

By the way, Org was quite unhappy with his return to hunting and gathering and strived for another chance to be successful in business. With backing from other cavemen, possibly the first venture capitalists, Org opened the very first assembly line that was capable of performing custom orders. He also invented the first bullhorn, made from large bamboo shafts, and started a cave to factory bullhorn network that allowed customers to call in orders and change them anywhere along the assembly process. Org was once again successful with the best line of rock tools in the three-village area. Even though DotOrg's business quickly dissolved, she was a true visionary and immediately went back to the drawing board. As this story closes, DotOrg is on the beach drawing in the sand with a stick. She is searching for a new revolutionary idea. She quietly ponders: "Since Org seems to have the tool making business locked up, maybe I could make life easier for cave citizens by providing cave-to-cave services, possibly wheel registration without leaving your cave..."

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# Public Voices Symposium:

## Governments, Governance and War: What We Learned in Iraq

### *Call for Manuscripts*

Iraq's links to al-Qaeda and its illicit stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction were the chief reasons advanced by the Bush Administration in making the case against Saddam Hussein and generating public support for the preemptive war with Iraq. Four months after the President declared an end to major combat operations on May 1, 2003, weapons of mass destruction are still to be found; the U.S. credibility has been shaken; the oil giant that Iraq once was lies in ruins, paralyzed by an energy crisis, anarchy, crime and acts of terror; the death toll of American soldiers keeps rising and now is higher than the death toll during the actual combat phase; and the liberated people do not show any signs of gratitude toward their liberators. At this point, it is clear that bringing peace and security to Iraq will take much longer than initially anticipated and that creating a democracy there is a very distant goal. It is also clear that the American troops are stretched too thin and that the U.S. lacks peacekeeping resources needed to occupy countries for long periods of time.

So, what vital lessons we, as public administrators, learned in Iraq? How has this new experience enriched, changed, confirmed, or refuted the theoretical tenets and practical guidelines of our discipline? *Public Voices* invites you to share your thoughts on the subject with its readers.

We seek manuscripts that reflect the unique approach of *Public Voices* in its focus on historical, artistic, and reflective expression concerning public administrators and the public service. Unlike more traditional journals, *Public Voices* publishes unorthodox and controversial perspectives on bureaucracy and the public sector. We encourage contributions from public servants, writers, artists, and academics in all fields. In addition to analytical articles, submissions may include eyewitness accounts, reflections, memoirs, original fiction, poetry, photographs, art, and critiques of existing works.

Valerie Patterson, Assistant Professor of Public Administration at the Florida International University, has gracefully agreed to 'host' the symposium.

**Please send your submissions to:**

Iryna Illiash, Managing Editor, *Public Voices*  
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Rutgers University, Campus at Newark  
701 Hill Hall  
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Newark, NJ 07102



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# The Disappearance of the Homemakers Club: A Dilemma for School Leaders

*Diane Ketelle*

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*"...We didn't even bother calling the Coast Guard, we were just too far out...  
There's really nothing to do but rely on the other guys around you."  
- from "The Perfect Storm" by Sebastian Junger*

When I was a girl growing up in rural northern California my mother belonged to a community group called, The Homemakers. The Homemakers were a group of women in the community who met once a month to have a potluck lunch together at alternating homes. The Homemakers did more than just have lunch together, they also raised money to buy library books and band instruments for the local public school, made seasonal decorations for the local convalescent home, acted as 4-H leaders, organized caroling, participated in the Farm Bureau and were eager to help with any civic activity. As my mother and her friends began to age and their children grew up there were no younger women who ever joined the group. The Homemakers have all but died away. My mother and two other living members still meet regularly, but they feel a sadness that the club that meant so much to them and to their community has not continued through the participation of younger members. This situation is not unique to their community and is a part of the problem with modern school reform efforts. Citizens all over America seem to be participating less in civic activities. Robert Putnam (2000) notes that although more Americans are bowling today than before, bowling in organized leagues has declined significantly. While people appear to enjoy bowling alone, it is threatening the livelihood of bowling lane proprietors who rely on the sale of food and drinks to survive. What does any of this mean to public schools and public education?

At the heart of public education is the notion that we are all, most centrally, citizens. As citizens we are all part of a broad public that should see great benefit in supporting public schools. Yet, as civic participation declines there is also a rising tendency for people to view their roles relative to public education, most centrally, as consumers. If one school cannot offer the programs or services wanted, people shop for the school that will.

How can we return to a broader notion of education? There is currently a need to focus on the public purpose of schooling. The notion of leading with public purpose derives from the progressive idea that human beings have both the desire and capacity to make the world a better place. Since the days of Tocqueville we have realized that material success and even equality do not ensure happiness. Tocqueville (1945) wrote about the passions of people living in democratic times and how those passions converged in the pursuit of wealth, which made individuals increasingly like one another. John Dewey (1934) nearly a century later wrote about the powerful forces that work against effective inquiry into institutions.

Conceptualizing public schools as public institutions that can grow and change is not a simple task. School leaders with public purpose view schools as transformative institutions that can measure their success, in large part, by the extent to which their graduates contribute positively to the world around them. Albert Adams (2000) argues that a meaningful commitment to public purpose in the form of volunteer programs that involve school age children is possible in any school, even when human and fiscal resources are low. The basic message is to make a difference.

The enormous changes that have transpired impacting the jobs, roles and responsibilities of school leaders offer an opportunity to build "public purpose" into the function of a school leaders position. Cultivating community through a shared vision that extends into the lives of students and families is important.

## **A New View of Leadership**

There is, in fact, a duality in the nature of public schooling. Schools have internal public purposes that focus on teaching and learning. These purposes are what most citizens think of as "schooling." However, there is more to school than what happens in the classroom. The external purposes of a school are the connections the school makes within a community. These connections are vitally important to the success of the school and in helping develop citizens with a civic capacity. Schools cannot be viewed relative only to their inward function.

Schools that are committed to their communities require leaders who have developed particular skills. This conception of the modern leader has three basic demands: 1) educational leaders should be civic leaders; 2) educational leaders should learn to collaborate with each other and community members in new ways and; 3) educational leaders need to view their work as more than instructional leadership in order to develop a vision that extends beyond the classroom and test scores. Educational leadership can represent a synthesis of America's public purposes, if a leader views such an effort as an aspect of his/her work.

Exploring new conceptions of school leadership is imperative in an ever-changing world. As the gaps between the wealthy and the poor grow wider and the "digital divide" leaves the poor further behind than ever, it becomes necessary to reflect on the purpose of schooling. The results of the STAR testing in California for 2001 showed that students from low income families fell far behind their classmates (EdSource, 2000). Public separations between the rich and the poor are not new. Some would say that the federalism as expressed by our Founding Fathers represented protection of the economic interests of the privileged class. The struggle between state's rights and national sovereignty was nothing more than the struggle between the landed gentry and the have-nots.

Because there are such separations in our society administrators have to "get real" when building community. The public wants authenticity. Jane Lindle (1989) found that although educators think parents want them to be "professional and businesslike," they actually want them to be the opposite. In her research parents of all socio-economic levels complained about teachers and principals being "patronizing" and "talking down." They liked the teachers and administrators who demonstrated "a personal touch."

## **Democracy and Public Purpose**

Community sustains democracy. Community members in all areas used to regularly participate in local parades, clubs or social groups. Now such civic participation is less common. Political philosophers nowadays talk about "deliberative democracy" (Putnam, 1995, p. 16). Deliberation requires that we not only listen to one another, but that we learn something about each other as well. It also requires that we take responsibility for our views and opinions. In this sense the various talk shows on the radio and television undermine deliberative democracy, while the weekly conversation at the bowling league or any other type of civic conversation contributes to it. Civic participation has public purpose. Conversations around potlucks and back to school nights bring communities closer and support the foundations of democracy.

## **Educational Leaders as Civic Leaders**

Modern schools will not be able to meet the challenges of change without connecting with parents and the public (Brandt, 1998). Building civic connections, however, is not easy. Parents and educators seem to be shockingly out of touch with each other. Leaders must find ways to help diverse groups of people define words such as “we” and “they.” This will require the ability to listen and the ability to act.

Putnam (1993) has also shown that effective governments in northern Italy are associated with a healthy public life. Putnam’s work suggests that a healthy public life may be associated with creating good public schools. In order to improve the public life of public school clientele, it is necessary for public school leaders to become actively involved in the communities that surround their schools and to work to make the public life in their communities better for every citizen. Putnam points out that a healthy public life consists of civic associations, norms of reciprocity and social trust. Individuals who live in areas where there is strong community are involved in public matters and relationships that “run horizontally (among equals) instead of vertically (between haves and have nots)” (Mathews, 1996, p. 60). Civic characteristics can be present in some areas and absent in others. In less civic areas people participate less in social organizations and local politics and their relationships tend to be more hierarchical, with those in need very dependent on those who are not in need.

Engaging civic participation requires planning and energy, but moreover administrators must possess a civic attitude that can help them develop a civic sensibility. Encompassed in such a sensibility are such qualities as honesty, patience, kindness, openness, empathy and political know-how.

The development of civic infrastructures rests on participation in formal and informal social systems. For school leaders, participating in Little League baseball games, neighborhood parties, potlucks, social clubs, local church gatherings and local politics can be just as important as developing a strong learning environment. Participating in a variety of social events helps people form ties to their community. These events offer the opportunity for individuals to chat about all sorts of issues. The bonds formed through conversation help include diverse members of the community and begin conversations.

## **Educational Leaders as Collaborators**

Chrislip and Larson (1994) propose frameworks for dealing with complex issues, engaging frustrated and angry citizens and generating the civic. They argue that in order to be a collaborative leader one must be able to: inspire commitment, be a peer problem solver, inspire hope and build broad based support through trust.

Building community can be viewed as an engagement that initiates a series of transformative events that encourage collaboration. Building networks of collective dialogue can help to create trust and cooperation because they reduce nonparticipation, uncertainty and they provide models for cooperation.

Facilitating collaboration sometimes takes an ability to see the extraordinary in any ordinary situation. Think, for example, of John Cage’s ability to enable us to hear sounds somehow silenced by the habitual and excluded from what we would ordinarily call music. In the same way leaders who cultivate cooperation look beyond a mundane situation in search of opportunity. The opportunity arises in the cultivation of the skills necessary to bring diverse groups together.

## **What Does This Mean?**

Educational leadership should engage individuals in the educational and civic community and assist in the bettering of public life and public schooling. Dewey (1916) once wrote, “the self is not something ready made, but something in continuous formation through choice and action” (p. 408). Leaders who possess a civic attitude will find engaging schools in public purpose more understandable through choice and action.

Focusing on strengthening public life and placing a strong emphasis on community building may strike some already stressed out educators as a distraction they cannot afford to entertain. However, public schools cannot exist without a public to support them and turning energy onto the public holds a logic from which we cannot escape.

The challenge is clear. Public purpose places a premium on public deliberation and public action. Leading with public purpose is not a technique, but, perhaps, a way of viewing the action that can occur in a community.

## Putting It All Together

David Berliner (2001) points out that public schools still succeed in offering a good education to children from middle class, “livable wages” neighborhoods, where decent housing and health care are available, and crime and drugs are not daily problems. Berliner goes on to explain that the American public may be missing the point when broadly criticizing public schools. Instead of a focus on generalized test results such as the TIMSS-R (Third International Mathematics and Science Study-Repeat), that generalize national scores and fail to acknowledge the very high achievement in some neighborhoods, we should address the wide variation in achievement in American schools. The poor, often minority student, is being denied what his/her more middle class counterpart is receiving on a daily basis. It only seems reasonable that less criticism of America’s schools is in order and greater participation in support of, not only public schools, but the neighborhoods that surround them and the families that live in them is necessary.

A moral emerges: The Homemakers had the right idea. Citizens who do what they can to improve public life in their community concurrently support more positive public schooling systems. The Homemakers understood that civic participation could enrich their lives and the lives of their children. This is an important lesson for public schools and school leaders. Reforming public education will require the re-engagement of the public. For this reason solid school reform must be reframed all over America as community building. With healthier public life will follow healthier public schools.

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Poetry

# The LAN Specialist

M. A. Schaffner

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You've heard that Tweety voice a thousand times  
in meeting rooms or hotel conference halls:  
the high-toned whine of the teacher's aide  
directing her maiden kindergarten.

for tracking and reporting, the pull down  
menus like injection-molded toys,  
the "simple procedures" like a new game –  
a higher level of Nintendo maybe –

while the actual faces in the generic halls  
drifted along like bees without a queen.  
Years ago there'd be a memo or a call  
bringing up issues that were often fuzzy

the feeling of fingers on the margins:  
black binders, white papers; all the colors  
we ever thought we'd ever want or need. Now,  
it's virtually-real strangers, e-mail,

You can visualize the blocks and puzzles  
there beside the cups and magic markers.  
*This will be fun*, she says, they always say,  
when showing you the latest application

so anyone you reach with this will be  
about as intimate a friend as Mario,  
Back at the office I was surrounded  
by charts, graphs, and screens in those same colors,

yet amenable to the laying on of hands:  
to interview notes I scribed on clipboards,  
then ordered and checked against references  
in books or loose leaf binders. I recall

databases, spreadsheets, and here she is again:  
Miss Johnson, the teacher who never aged.  
*It's easy*, she says, as if somehow I'd learned

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how smart an adult I could stand to be.

# Dry Season

*M. A. Schaffner*

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When jackals announce new initiatives,  
wildebeest tramp their memos in the dust,  
while hungry leonine executives  
quote Peters, as if that might gain their trust.  
Conferring by cellphone, wild dogs display  
renewed interest in streamlining the herds  
of clerical ungulates, yet their prey  
quickly attracts sycophantic vultures.

Watching from a boardroom in the banyan,  
leopards think Theory Z deserves a try.  
A hunter starves with no strategic plan,  
they think. Yet from a hot and empty sky  
comes a sun that glazes withered hardpan  
and kills, or not, without explaining why.

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# The Bureau of Ourselves

*M. A. Schaffner*

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Our interns have ideals that we can use  
to scrape out Augean files for a report,  
or assess another offer of support  
from smugly servile vendors, while we choose  
the forms that they can fill, and we can lose.

We watch them through our morning coffees' steam,  
a foggy mirror of recollected selves.  
They take us back, as in a kind of dream,  
to when we too seemed sharp as Santa's elves,  
though all the toys we carved stayed on the shelves.

They'll want to know "the point." Well, here's Rule One:  
Stay on the job, but never get it done.



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**M. A. Schaffner** has poems recently published or forthcoming in *Prairie Schooner*, *Imago* (Australia), *Orbis* (UK), *Poetry Salzburg*, and *Planet: The Welsh Internationalist*. Schaffner's first collection, "The Good Opinion of Squirrels," won the Washington Writer's Center publication prize and the Columbia Book Award in 1997. His first novel, "War Boys," is forthcoming from Welcome Rain Publishes.

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# The Dean and the Princess: Why Tenure Matters

*Michael W. Popejoy*

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As a doctoral student being rigorously processed into the roles, personality, and attitudes expected of a future professor, I was indoctrinated, socialized, molded and literally brainwashed to fit into the social fabric of academe as dictated by the world view of my streetwise professors. During this time of hazing and harassment, I often wondered what all the hoopla was regarding tenure. It seemed they, academe's masters of free will, would always preface comments about work, appearance, or behavior in terms of what it took to get tenure. This was treated as the Holy Grail of the academic profession. What's the big deal? You get a job, you work hard, you stay or you move on—so what? Who would argue with good work? If a professor's productivity fell short of expectations, then maybe it was time to look for another career—consulting perhaps, or worse, community college teaching.

I was young and confident that any university department search committee would quickly spot genius, sign me and work hard to keep me from going anywhere else. I was convinced that tenure protected controversial research, and maybe the occasional lazy professor, who once getting tenure, ceased scholarly production while coasting to retirement. I had no idea tenure protected professors from politics, intrigues, and office romances.

To the naïve scholarly mind, these kinds of things happened elsewhere in the work world, certainly not in the rarified atmosphere of the academy—the holy ground where intelligent minds came together to think big thoughts, hold court with each other and debate complex issues in an atmosphere of safety and open mindedness. Well, that notion soon joined the one that bad things do not happen to good people and doing good work will always be rewarded with promotions and generous raises in salary. Frankly, the only truism is that no good deed goes unpunished—which works well with the axiom of certainty: death and taxes.

My first job as a professor, with the ink barely dry on my Ph.D., was basically a done deal. A local liberal arts “teaching” college made an offer. This, I thought, was a good opportunity—a new axiom: if it's too good, even if it's true, it's probably bad. But, I would not have to relocate from home to some dreary town in central somewhere else. A decent salary and benefits were part of the deal. The office had a window—professors usually don't get glass until sometime between tenure and retirement, unless, of course, they became administrators. Ok, so the teaching load was heavier than I expected, but they didn't require professors to publish. Research intimidated them—new paradigms required new teaching notes. It was best to not mention theory building—it made people uncomfortable. They were mostly interested in good teaching evaluations and no complaints from the spoiled sons and daughters of the well heeled. They liked to think of themselves as the school that catered to the academically challenged children of financially gifted parents. This means you taught them to understand the subject or failing that, you passed them

anyway—and we didn't even have a football team. To this day, I believe I got the offer because everyone else refused.

My dissertation advisor offered up some sage advice—that is what dissertation advisers do in exchange for their reduced teaching load. His prophecy was that if I took the job and stayed there any length of time at all, it would probably be the last time anyone ever heard from me again—he got a course reduction from his teaching load for that advice. Seven years, no publications, and no job later—how right he had been.

My first boss was an interim dean who knew the meaning of interim. He spent most of the year in his office behind a closed door hiding from students, faculty, and the Provost. His plan was to make no decisions before a permanent dean was found. He also had a window, but he kept the blinds tightly closed. He played religious music on his CD player, prayed a lot, and often seemed under the influence of medications—not all of them I suspect came with prescriptions. When the time came for faculty evaluations, he peeked out his door, handed the blank forms to his secretary with instructions to have professors rate themselves, slip them under his door, and he would sign them. We were all above average in all categories.

My second boss, the permanent dean, replacing the interim dean who left the college to found a religious order in the Blue Ridge Mountains, was a former Marine drill instructor who got a Ph.D. on the GI Bill but who wished he was still in the Corps. If he could have gotten away with it, he would have had us doing PT in the morning and marching to class in close order drill formation. He even wanted us to wear ties and jackets in the classroom. (I found this unusual since one of my more eccentric professors at the university was fond of wearing pajamas to work. Of course he was tenured). I think the new dean missed having people come to attention when he entered a room—that bothered him.

Two faculty members did not survive his reign since without tenure, when their contracts expired they were not renewed—that's how it works in contract education—no one gets fired—they just get nonrenewed. I managed to keep my job because even though I was next in line at the firing squad. The Marine dean discovered at the last minute that I could generate cash flow for the school. He found out I could do something called sponsored research. Most professors toil for months and years to publish their work in the most prestigious academic journals for which no money is paid. Even housewives who get a humorous anecdote published in Readers' Digest get paid. However, sponsored research means that a client is willing to pay—and pay quite well—for applied projects. After the first fifty thousand dollar contract was awarded under my name as principal investigator, the dean no longer wanted to drum me out of his beloved Corps. He went from withholding his signature from my next annual contract to making me department chair. This was a clue that even in academe, the ivory tower of great thinkers; cash flow is good—and comma money is even better—comma money is a technical term used by accountants to denote cash in amounts sufficient to require commas.

Three years later, a new sheriff is in town—one of our own gets promoted to dean and discovers administrator power he never enjoyed as a faculty member. As a former homicide detective and hostage negotiator, the new dean had finally found a precinct to command—once a cop, always a cop. But, every smiling cardboard hero needs two things to go along with the badge and the gun; a sidekick and a lady. Our new dean was recruiting.

A characteristic required of sidekicks is hero worship and agreement with every word uttered by the dean. A search was on for a sycophant assistant and one was quickly found as others failed the test of office by speaking their minds on issues critical to the future of the school. Now, that just wouldn't do. Sidekicks need to suck up to the boss so tightly that if he stopped suddenly they would have to have their head surgically removed from his southern exposure. The agreeable sidekick was easily purchased with the promise of an assistant dean position.

So, what about the lady—no hero is complete without a lady. The dean was married of course, but something new was needed to go with the new job. He wanted fresh excitement with someone perky and cute. Students were no good for this role—of course, there were babes on campus and some were willing to cuddle up to power, but they could not be trusted to keep quiet. Affairs with a professor came with bragging rights, but getting down with a dean was big news. It would be all over campus before he could get his pants up. Hey, how about the secretary? Well now there's an original thought. Who would ever suspect the dean was boinking his secretary?

Princess was fully qualified for the role. She was tall, leggy, long brown hair, with deep brown eyes and a cute smile. She had a motion all her own when she walked by— with skirts low enough to hide the promised land but short enough to let men know the possibilities. She was sensuous, flirty and by all accounts, pretty easy. Like the dean, she was also married, but not to the man of her dreams, and she was fatally attracted to any man with a doctorate and a title. Actually, she was attracted to any man with a job requiring a tie and jacket. For the dean, the secretary was even easier than landing a sidekick. He didn't have to promise her a promotion.

Now, how does all this office politicking, intrigue and romance affect me, an untenured, contract professor who in reality makes more money for the school in sponsored research than they pay in annual salary? My defining moment of truth all turns on the unsubstantiated rumor that she said, that I said, that the dean was banging the babe in the front office—which by the way is a fact—but I didn't say it—I didn't have to; everyone already knew it and everyone talked about it. It's just that the dean and his new lady didn't know that everyone knew and talked about it.

Next, the dean puts on his cop face and interrogates everyone in the school about who knows what about whom and who said what about him and her. The Provost refused to sign the dean's purchase order for a polygraph machine. So, he just rounded up all the usual suspects—the faculty. Obviously in his mind the only way people knew is if someone started the rumor. The cop dean did not have a clue that when he and she went on a retreat alone for two days to do "strategic planning" that some people were going to get the wrong impression. The genius of his plan was that his wife and her husband fell for it and the college even paid for it. But, that wasn't enough—more time for both of them away from the office—always, as he said, working on special projects. Around campus, whenever sex is in the wind, the code word is "special projects." Whenever they were both off campus at the same time, everyone says that Princess is out working on the Dean's "special project."

Well, the dean had to quiet rumors and set an example for cop-like toughness. My contract was due for renewal. Signatures were required the following week. The cop dean decided that by making an example of one faculty member, he hoped he could smooth over the messiness of his indiscretions. He announced my nonrenewal while at the same time subtly letting others on the faculty know they could easily be next.

Today, the school still searches for surfer dudes with wealthy parents, the dean is still boinking the princess, the sidekick is still waiting for the promised promotion, the faculty still speak of "special projects" at the water cooler and I am still looking for a tenure track job with a new respect for why tenure mattered so much to my professors.

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# Coming Up Empty in the People's Republic

*Larry Hubbel*

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Dear Francie:

"I'm writing you this letter from prison . . ."

That's too abrupt . . . far too abrupt. That will scare the hell out of her. Don't get to the point so fast. I have to sort of ease into it . . . the prison part. I'll start over.

Dear Francie:

"You were right. I never should have come here. Guess what? I'm in prison, but I've had a young friend contact the American consulate. . ."

Too flip. Damn . . . I'm in prison, for God's sake, not some antiseptic, sterile American prison where prisoners, if they're lucky, can still watch their favorite sitcoms. No . . . I'm in a smelly, filthy, disease-ridden Chinese prison where petulant rats and angry, emaciated guards roam the corridors. There are large insects crawling up walls, which are moist with some kind of grayish green mold.

I am sharing my six by nine foot rectangular cage with two people. We have little in common. One of them is a bearded, balding old man, who is almost immobile, hunched and quite likely mute. The other is a 20ish hyperactive probable-schizophrenic, who occasionally bangs his head against the wall. I guess the Chinese criminal justice system doesn't distinguish between mental disorders and criminal behavior.

Each of us occupies a corner of our dingy abode. The two of them crouch, Asian style, and lean their backs against one of the walls of their respective corners. My knees are not so limber, nor do I find that position comfortable. I sit on the floor, the floor that has probably never been washed, at least in my lifetime. A pail full of shit and urine, which undoubtedly is rarely emptied, occupies the fourth corner. Fortunately, I have not had to use our humble facilities, if the pail can be called that. Thank God for my early toilet training. It must have contributed to my anal retentiveness. I have had no need to defecate in the past three days since I have been here. I can only hope that my intestines continue to cooperate, because this accommodation has no toilet paper, nor does it have paper of any kind.

In addition to the clothing that I'm wearing, several business cards and my Waterman pen, I have been stripped of my other possessions. I will probably never see them again. My only other possession is a gray, standard-issue,

stained, lice-covered blanket that was loaned to me by one of the guards. Fortunately, I haven't had to use it yet. The nights have not been cold, but the cell is quite damp.

But I've got to get back to my task at hand. What am I going to tell Francie? I don't want to scare her too much, but I've got to convey the gravity of the situation. What am I thinking - that won't be a problem. What could be worse than being confined in a Chinese jail? A Russian jail? A Moldovan jail? Dante's hell?

Oh hell . . . just write. Stream of consciousness or whatever. I've only got six business cards left to express my thoughts. The damn guards won't give me any paper.

I need to be precise!

Dear Francie:

"I can't be entirely candid, since I don't know who will read this, but I'm in prison. I'll explain later how I got here. I think for a small bribe, my Waterman pen, they will give this note to a young friend of mine on the outside, who will hopefully then fax this note to you.

"I've tried to make contact with the American consulate. I don't know if they know I'm here. This note is part message, part act of self-therapy. Maybe by the time you receive this I will be free and it will all seem like a bad dream.

"I'll call you as soon as I get out and shortly after that will scuttle my research and leave China. So much for my sabbatical plans!"

Love  
Jack

Why did I come to China? Was it excessive ambition? A desire to understand what others believed was unknowable? Less than temporary insanity?

Am I an academic? Or am I really a journalist intent upon scooping my colleagues with a hot story, here, behind what used to be called the "Bamboo Curtain?"

Was I just bored? Looking for an excuse not to teach my undergraduate charges for ONE PRECIOUS YEAR.

How did I get into this mess?

Was it really just a year ago that I was sitting in the faculty dining room with my colleague and confidante George Guffey? We were complaining about the state of our university: faculty raises, or the lack of them; the president's latest plan to make the university "new and improved," like some newly marketed detergent; and a student in the department who went straight to the vice-president of academic affairs because he didn't like his grade. It was a gripe session, nothing more or less. It was a chance to vent. The faculty dining room is an excellent venue for venting. It reminds me so vividly of our second-class standing - bland food, institutional décor, gum pressed under the dining room tabletops. And then contributing to our aggravation, the subject of academic awards - another injustice - came up.

"Those guys in sociology have all the luck. Isn't this the third time in five years that one of them has won the President's Award? What a great deal. The winner gets the year off and 100 percent of his pay," I say, disgruntled and envious.

"It isn't luck. They pack the committees. It becomes self-perpetuating. The previous winners of the President's Award decide who are the future winners. So naturally, they are more inclined to pick one of their own," claims George.

“That’s patently unfair!”

“Hey, remember where you are. This is academia.”

“Please George, even from a cynical perspective, don’t you think it would be wise for them to spread around the riches a little more evenly? It’s only good form, or better yet, good politics.”

“Ah . . . they don’t think anyone will notice. They only get the award every third year or so. This last winner was an exception. Look . . . if you’re so anxious to get the year off, why don’t you apply for the Knox Award. It’s not as lucrative as the President’s Award, but it does give you about 90 percent of your salary.”

“I’ve never heard of it.”

“Yeah, not many people have. I don’t talk about it much. I’m thinking about applying for it in a few years. Why should I increase the competition?”

“Is there a catch?”

Not really. The only requirement is that the recipient has to conduct research abroad.”

“That probably excludes me. All of my research has been confined to the good old USA.”

“Is that by choice or because you haven’t found or been presented with an opportunity?”

“I guess by choice. It’s too hard for me to study abroad considering the ages of my kids. Besides Francie likes her job so much. She couldn’t leave it for a year. I wouldn’t want to be away from them for a whole year.”

“You don’t have to go for a whole year. No one is expecting you to devote all your energies to your research. You don’t have to be a monk.”

“Yeah, but what would I study?”

“No, you’re asking the wrong question. The question you should be asking is ‘Where do I want to go?’”

“I don’t know . . . France or Italy would be nice.”

“No, that sounds too much like a vacation. Besides . . . do you speak either language?”

“No.”

“I’ve got some contacts in Kenya.”

“Forget it. I don’t like big bugs or things that creep in the night.”

“Ever been to Asia?”

“Just Bali.”

“Must have been nice. I can’t offer you Bali. But how about China?”

“The People’s Republic?”

“Yeah. Where else? Are you still living in the 70s? You know Yu Jian Zhong don’t you?”

“Who’s that again?”

"My graduate assistant, Jian."

"Oh yeah. How is he working out? Didn't you get some complaints about him from the students in your introductory course?"

"Yeah, but the waves have been calmed. His English is improving and the students' don't complain about him so much since he has raised their grades.

"You know he's been trying to get me to visit his university ever since he started working for me. I don't have the time or the interest. However, if you're interested, I bet I could parlay an invitation for you."

"Yeah sure - why not? At least I could talk to him."

The next week Yu Jian Zhong and I meet for a get-to-know-you coffee break in the student union. Since my conversation with George, I've done some reading on China and have developed a possible research topic: democracy in the villages. In 1987, the Chinese government authorized every village to hold elections for their leaders. They didn't do it out of a sense of idealism. Not those guys! They were apparently concerned about the increasing restiveness, and in some cases, outright rebellion in some villages. It seems many of China's downtrodden peasants are not only upset about the government's one-child policy, but also about the amount of taxes they pay and the amount of grain that the government procures from them. Thus, it is better from the government's perspective to have an elected leader to enforce these less than popular policies than a government appointee. It is actually quite a clever plan, cooptation at its most blatant. The autocrats at the top of the institutional pyramid still make the policies, while the elected grunts at the bottom have to enforce it. The plan's principal flaw, and many of China's autocrats are mindful of this, is how do you contain the rising tide of democratic expectations once people have sampled the electoral process?

Jian is neatly dressed in a tie, perfectly centered around his collar. His shirt, unlike mine, is pressed. He looks studious, meticulous and slightly deferential. Although it is hard for me to judge his age, I would guess that he is around 40.

"Good to meet you Professor Handrich. Professor Guffey says you are an excellent scholar. I am honored."

"Thank you Jian. Would you like an espresso . . . or some tea?"

"Tea please."

I make the order at the mobile stand in the union and pull out four bills that I had stuffed in my pocket earlier. Unfortunately four bills don't pay for two hot beverages in today's espresso economy. I am forced to dig in my wallet and pull out a five and then I return to my pocket to rummage for some change.

"Why did you decide to study in this country?" I ask.

"It is very prestigious to study in the United States. When I successfully complete masters degree I will receive promotion," Jian replies. "Many of my colleagues would like to come to the United States, but it is very difficult to get visa. I have tried three times previously to obtain one. It was only on my fourth visit to the consulate that I was successful."

"Do you have a family?"

"Yes, I have a wife and a child. They are in China."

"That's too bad. You must miss them."

"Unfortunately, many Chinese who study abroad cannot afford to bring their families. It is very expensive."



"I'm sorry I don't know this, but what university are you affiliated with in China?"

"Dongtai University. It is a university in Guangdong Province in southeastern China. We are growing very quickly, constructing many new buildings. There is much demand for teachers in China."

"What do you teach in your university?" continuing with what I am now realizing may be my somewhat aggravating 'twenty questions.'

"I am the chair of the Political Science and Law Department. I hold the rank of professor."

Then he turns the tables on me and asks me a question. "Are you interested in visiting my country?"

"Yes."

"As a tourist or a scholar?"

"A scholar."

"Perhaps I can arrange an invitation from my institution."

"That would be nice. I've done some reading about the village elections that have been conducted recently. I wasn't aware how many elections have already been held. They sound fascinating. That's quite a step forward for China."

"Yes, Jiang Zimen wants to bring democracy to the masses. He is a very wise leader. But we cannot proceed too quickly. It must be done slowly."

"Did you see Jiang Zimen on '60 Minutes' last Sunday? He talked about it with Mike Wallace."

"No I didn't."

"This might be a very opportune time for me to do this study, especially since Jiang Zimen has been promoting China's village democracy in this country." I am ashamed, but only slightly ashamed, for having made that comment. What am I a propagandist or a critical scholar? At what cost research?

"Perhaps."

"Do you think it would be possible for me to visit a few villages? I would be interested in learning how governance has changed since the elections."

"It is often difficult to get approval for foreigners to visit villages. The authorities must agree. Sometimes it takes a long time. But I make inquiry. I know some people who can help. I know many government officials. You must have similar problems – doing research in this country."

"Well, yes," I concede somewhat sheepishly, "I know about bureaucratic delays. I teach public administration."

That was the substantive portion of our conversation. I came away from our talk thinking that the logistics involved in this research project were going to be difficult. The key was access. China, despite its capitalistic trappings, is still a closed, highly nationalistic society with a deep-seated sense of political paranoia that feeds on distrust of the West. And the 1999 American bombing of their embassy in Belgrade didn't help matters.

Why would "the authorities" want an American academic traipsing around their backcountry villages and uncovering possibly unfavorable information? Would they think I was a spy? At the very least, from their perspective, could I be counted on to write favorable things about their motherland? What would be in it for them?

Incentives . . . I've got to build in some incentives. Otherwise my research project is probably a dead ender.

What kind of incentives would appeal to them? Well . . . Jian has already told me two. Many Chinese scholars want to come to the United States to get a graduate degree and many of them are probably short of money.

A grant! I've got to find a grant - some kind of grant from a funding agency that funds faculty exchanges and gives me access to the villages. Maybe we could propose developing Chinese-American teams, composed of academics from our respective schools, who would provide training in a number of management areas like financial management and dispute resolution.

Doesn't the Institute for the Applied Social Sciences fund programs like that? As I recall, an institution can ask for up to 80 thousand for a three-year period. The exchange has to have some kind of thematic emphasis. That's easy - village democracy in China. Except I don't think I'll put democracy in the title. That might offend Chinese sensibilities. Civil society - that sounds better. Besides, that has become the latest buzzword in development circles. I've got to come up with a grant that on the one hand does not appear to be intrusive and thus reduces the fears of Communist Party officials, but on the other hand, sounds cutting edge and thus fulfills the expectations of aid officials in this country.

Building on my initial idea, the next three months are productive. I am one of the three recipients of the Knox Award. Francie buys into my research plans. My relationship with Jian develops and his institution offers me an invitation to visit his university. I make some initial contacts with academics at Dongtai who seem genuinely interested in my impending visit, given the enthusiasm of their e-mails. I write much of the grant application while continuing to do research about China's nascent village democracies. It's my plan to visit Dongtai University for one month in the following September for the purpose of finalizing the grant and getting permission from "the authorities." My one-month stay will lay the groundwork for a much longer stay in the spring when I hope to spend time in the villages and do field research.

Everything seems to be on track. Who says it is difficult doing research in a closed society? All you need are the right contacts.

Several months later, I leave for China. After an uneventful, but long trip. I am met at Dongtai's regional airport by a small delegation, including Yu Jian Zhong, who having just obtained his masters degree from my institution, has returned to China to resume his post as chair of his department. The School's vice-president, another administrative official, the vice-chairman of the Political Science and Law Department, various members of that department, several students and four drivers are also present. Two of the students are holding up a ten-foot long sign that reads "Dongtai University Express a Warm Welcome to Professor Handrich." Jian immediately embraces me, a rather surprising gesture for a Chinese male, who are normally more reserved. One of the faculty members presents me with a small basket of apples, which I later find out are a trademark of Dongtai. A driver grabs my bags. The students bow slightly. The vice-president, speaking through an interpreter, tells me what an honor it is for them to host me. A photographer with a large amount of related gear almost continuously takes pictures of me in various poses.

I am only slightly embarrassed. I could get used to this. It's a welcome worthy of a visiting dignitary, except I'm only a professor, a tenured professor to be sure, but I wear no insignias on my chest. Welcome to Dongtai. Here I am, a celebrity. The disembarking passengers, not so casually turn their heads and stare at me, trying to assess my importance. My delegation, on the other hand, seems to have no doubts about my fame or at the very least, my near-fame.

After shaking many hands, I am whisked into a car and our five-car motorcade proceeds to the university. In the car I am sitting next to the vice-president, who speaks no English. I have already forgotten his name. I'll remember him, because a smile seems to be permanently imprinted on his face. He must involve himself in many of these greeting of foreign guests. Jian occupies the window seat next to him. A fellow who introduces himself as Wang Rongan and speaks excellent English occupies the front seat. My first impression of him is altogether different. His face seems taut and his eyes quite alert, implying to me a steady suspiciousness.

Addressing my question to Wang, I ask, "What is your position at the university?"

"I am the Foreign Affairs Officer. It is my duty to look after our foreign guests."

"Do you have many foreign guests?"

"Why, of course. Many students from Korea and Japan come to my university to learn Chinese. We provide them with an intensive two-year program. They come because they want to do business in China. So they must learn Chinese.

"When we arrive at the university, we will show you to your room. Rest this afternoon. You must be tired. Tonight the vice-president will host a banquet in your honor."

"Thank you, but that really isn't necessary."

"Please, it is our honor. It is not often that we are able to host a dean from an American university."

I say nothing, not wanting to correct one of my hosts and thereby embarrass Jian. However, I also secretly relish my new anointment, even though it is wholly inaccurate. I've never been a department head, let alone a dean. Jian must have added to my status, so as to ensure that I received adequate cooperation from "the authorities."

Jian interrupts the temporary silence. Perhaps he is secretly relieved that I have not chosen to contradict my enhanced title. "You will be staying in the foreign teacher's dormitory," says Jian. "I hope that you find your accommodations suitable. We reserve it for our special guests."

"I'm sure I will. Thank you."

However, before I check-in, I am given a brief walking tour of the campus. At the front gate of the campus is a large guardhouse with a rounded picture window. The guardhouse would be ominous were it not for the fact that the guards seem very lax about who enters and leaves. The campus has more trees than I expected and a large water garden, which is bisected by a steep bridge, is one of the first things that new visitors focus on. It's a hilly campus with a nearly constant 10 percent uphill grade, as I progress from the entrance. My legs are getting sore. The occasional goat munches grass in the adjoining hills and they occasionally wander onto the campus grounds. The classroom buildings look newly constructed. Some groups of students, organized into labor details, pull weeds, pick up garbage and hoe the soil. Other groups of students, the first year students, wear military uniforms and march in staccato time following the commands of their senior officers.

After checking in at the front desk, I am brought to my room. Although it is undoubtedly sumptuous by rural Chinese standards, it wouldn't receive a pass from AAA. The room is dimly lit by what appears to be less than a 40-watt bulb. A tiny lamp with a slightly singed shade is my only other source of light. The mattress is board-like. The sheets look like they haven't been washed since the last guest stayed in the room. The lack of electrical outlets precludes the television set and the refrigerator from being plugged in simultaneously. The two chairs in the room, although they have some ergonomic qualities, are made of wood and lack any padding.

The bathroom is utilitarian, if not particularly hygienic. There is a toilet with a seat – for that I am grateful. The lack of two-ply toilet paper is made up for by my obsessive-compulsiveness. I brought my own. I'm not sure if the floor tiles are discolored because dirt has been ground into them or if the person who did the grouting was especially sloppy. Finally, I'm going to have to time my showers carefully. Hot water is only available between the hours of seven and ten in the evening.

Promptly at the hour of six, I meet my hosts for dinner outside the dining hall, which is situated next door to the foreign teacher's dormitory. My hosts are the remnants of the delegation that met me at the airport: the vice president, Jian and Wang Rongan, the so-called foreign affairs officer. Unlike most of the diners who select food from a common table, cafeteria-style, we are escorted to a private room. In my first introduction to Chinese table etiquette, I learn that where one sits is very important. The principal host typically sits opposite the door, which in this case is the vice-president, and the principal guest, a distinction that I hold for this meal, sits to the right of that person.

The table is typically round and a large revolving platter, what Americans call a "lazy Susan," is situated in the middle of the table. Throughout the course of the dinner, several waitresses bring multiple dishes of food. Once the banquet is in full swing, there are no less than 20 dishes of food on the table at any one time. Sometimes the host and/or the waitress are forced to balance the many dishes of food between each other because of limited space. At a Chinese banquet, one must learn to pace oneself, especially if one is the principal guest. To refuse food, especially food from the principal host is a major faux pas. Thus, one must eat only small portions of any dish, because the amount of food served can be truly overwhelming.

"Tell me Dean Handrich," asks the vice-president through Wang Rongan who serves as the interpreter, "do you like Chinese food?"

"Yes, very much," I reply.

"You are very good with your chopsticks," which seems to be an accurate remark until I drop a dumpling into my soup causing the soup to splatter on my shirt. To minimize my embarrassment, the vice-president hands me a spoon.

"We have a very full schedule planned for you. Professor Yu has arranged more than ten lectures for you. I am certain that our students will benefit from your wisdom. I understand that you will speak on the upcoming American presidential election and on American culture. Very interesting!"

"Yes, I am looking forward meeting your students."

Should I start talking about the grant or put it on hold for the time being? I know the Chinese like to get to know you before they conduct business. I had better wait for a more appropriate time. For the time being, I'll put it on hold. I've got plenty of time to get down to business.

The next day I give the first of several lectures. I am introduced by Jian to a class of roughly 200 students.

"This is Professor Handrich from the United States. I knew Professor Handrich in the United States. He is a friend of China. He is the dean of the Political Science Department," he says in English.

My newly designated title has, by now, become almost a matter of fact - at least in Dongtai.

"He visit us during the next month. Today he talks about the American presidential election. But he answer questions on any topic."

With that brief introduction, what had been a seemingly sedate audience is transformed into a rousing crowd. Spontaneously, the students rise and give me a standing ovation. I am surprised by their enthusiasm. They must have liked Jian's "friend of China" remark. Having made his introduction, Yu Jian Zhong leaves the lecture hall.

"I am very pleased to be here today," I talk at about one third the speed that I usually deliver my lectures. "I'm not sure how much you know about the American presidential process. It is a process embodied in the American Constitution."

'Embodied' that's a rather unusual word, they probably don't understand it, but I don't see anyone grabbing for their electronic translators.

"I mean it's in the Constitution. You know the American Constitution is a very old document. It was written very long ago - more than 200 years. The people we call the Founding Fathers were the men, and all of them were men, did not entirely trust the people, so they created a rather cumbersome, I mean complicated system for electing the president. The people do not directly elect the president. No, instead the American voters elect people who we call electors who in turn vote for the president. There are 538 electors, and they make up what we call the Electoral College.

"Indeed, there have been instances and the presidential election in 2000 may be one of them when a majority of the American voters vote for one candidate, and the Electoral College elects the other candidate. This is possible

because the presidential election is really run on a state-by-state basis. The number of electors each state has is determined by the number of representatives and senators that represent that state.”

Now this looks more familiar. The eyes of many of my students have started to glaze over. Their enthusiasm for me is waning. In spite of the standing ovation, many of them are now starting to resemble some of my youthful charges back in the States – fatigued, bored and only occasionally amused by my ramblings. Nevertheless, I continue on, unsure whether I have lost my audience because of the intricacies of the Electoral College. I draw maps, make comments about voting trends, explain the positions of the major presidential candidates and tell the occasional joke, which is probably too cultural-specific. After speaking for almost 45 minutes, I ask for questions. The silence is deafening. Rather than staring at my audience, my eyes instead focus on a large spider web that hangs between a pipe and a broken windowpane.

“You know,” I entreat them, “there is no shame if your question is not grammatical. Your English can only improve with practice.”

Still no questions. I told Jian I would speak for 1½ hours. I’ve still got 45 minutes to kill. Maybe I should let them out early. There’s no harm in that.

Then I take another tack. “If you prefer, you could write out questions and pass them forward.”

Bingo! Out come their electronic translators and sheets of paper from their notebooks. Within two minutes several sheets of paper are delivered to me at the podium. I read them aloud.

“Do you like Chinese food?”

“Yes, I like it very much. I know that McDonalds, Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken have become very popular in this country, but Chinese food is really much more nutritious,” I say, trying my best to be culturally correct. “You know I live in a small town, but we have five Chinese restaurants. I go to them often.”

“Have you seen the film ‘Titanic?’ Who was your favorite actor?”

“I did see ‘Titanic.’ I can’t say it was my favorite film. To tell you the truth, I’m not sure I had a favorite actor.”

“I want to go to college in the United States, but I do not know what I should do?”

“I know that many Chinese students want to study in the United States. There are many Chinese students in the United States – more than 50 thousand. It is very competitive. I would suggest that you first choose your field of study and then find out which schools specialize in that area. The American magazine *US News and World Report* has an excellent web site, which ranks American universities by field. I suggest you consult it.”

These questions are followed up by a question about Taiwan. I dodge that one, none too skillfully. Several questions about American love relationships. I provide G-rated responses, but nevertheless hold their attention. One question is about the cost of various items, including gasoline, cars, houses and meat. However, I don’t receive one question about my topic – the American presidential election and campaign. Following the lecture, I am mobbed by about 50 students who are anxious to have their picture taken with me or have me autograph their books, papers, etc. One person even has me sign my name to a ten-Yuan note. Some of them ask me questions about specific American universities. I feel like a rock star.

That evening, I am treated to another dinner in the university dining room. This time my host is Wang Rongan. Yu Jian Zhong also attends along with his wife, Ju Fen, and his daughter, Yu Lili. In addition, to being treated to crabs, a carp, sea cucumbers, squid and other foods presumably from the sea, we are also offered a variety of vegetables and meat dishes. Once again – too much food.

“My daughter has come from Guangzhou for the Moon Festival. She will stay here for one week and serve as your guide and translator,” says Jian.

"That's very kind of you, but you must have better things to do," addressing myself to Lili, "than showing me around."

"Please, it is my pleasure," she replies. Lili is in her early 20s. "I have little work during this month of the year."

"Lili will take you to places around Dongtai," says Jian.

"Do you think we will have some time to discuss the grant this week?" I ask hopefully.

"This week and next we are very busy. Very busy with promotions. I am on both the departmental and the university committee. We talk soon, but until then, Lili will accompany you."

Am I getting the blow off? Are they genuinely busy or are they reluctant to tell me "no" flat out? I wish I could understand more Chinese so that I could decipher a little more what's going on.

"Professor Handrich, how many of your students study Chinese?"

"My university first offered an introductory course in Chinese last year. I think there were about 20 students enrolled in it. I took it. It is my understanding that next year we will also offer an intermediate course."

"Do you think that those students might be interested in studying Chinese in Dongtai?"

"I guess it's possible. It would probably have to occur during the summer or winter break. How long would the course be?"

"That is up to you. We are very flexible. Do you have a Chinese department?"

"No Chinese department, simply a foreign language department. The Chinese course is taught by an adjunct professor."

"I see. This is another way that we could expand our relationship. I would like to offer a toast. To our guest from the United States – may we have a long and prosperous friendship."

We raise our glasses of wine and suddenly I am more optimistic. Perhaps creating the opportunity for American students to study in Dongtai is another incentive for them to buy into the grant and allow me to carry on with my research plans.

After the toast, which produces smiles among all the parties, Jian leans over to me. "I almost forget Professor She Zhengrong wants to talk with you. He wants you to provide some lectures to some of his students. He stop by your room in a few days."

"My pleasure," always the gracious guest.

During the following few days, Lili takes me on a tour of Dongtai. Unfortunately, there is not that much to see. It is not a tourist destination, although it is located on the ocean. It is a town of around 500 thousand people – fairly small by Chinese standards. Small industries are scattered throughout the town. People and bikes are everywhere. Although to many Americans, China's one child policy smacks of the worst aspects of "social engineering," I can understand why the authorities instituted it. China's population is approximately five times as much as the population of the United States, and although China's land area is roughly equivalent to that of the United States, very few people live in the western half of China. As Lili is wont to say when we are caught in a traffic jam: "Too many people." I most heartily agree.

In our sojourn around Dongtai, we make pilgrimages to the standard sights. We visit the zoo, where bored, but sometimes angry animals are confined in sparse cages. Given the conditions, I excuse the hippopotamus when it turns around, roars and bares its teeth at the patron who chose to swat its backside. The lions are also in close enough range to pet, but I see no one taking advantage of that opportunity. I also find it strange that one of the

exhibits has dogs in cages. Perhaps this actually provides the beasts with some protection, since dogs in China are more likely to be raised for their meat than for their companionship.

I am less than thrilled when Lili and I are given, for a small fee, a private tour of the snake exhibit. Our private guide/zookeeper apparently wants to assure us that we are getting our money's worth. However, I really don't find it necessary for him to rouse the sleeping cobra with a stick. The partially opened glass sliding door that separates us from the cobra does not seem like adequate protection when it lunges in our direction. After our run-in with the cobra, I decline the chance to stroke the python, although despite the prodding by its keeper it is remarkably somnolent.

A Russian circus is in town. Lili assumes that I want to go. Another opportunity to see animals being poked at! The bears jump through hoops. The lions are whipped until they perform some nominal tricks. The elephants reluctantly place their front feet on their fellow's backs and then march in time to the music. Like life at the zoo, life at the circus is a tortured experience for the animals and for animal rights activists, although I suspect that China has a dearth of them. As a person who has no such inclinations, I am even a little put off. The house is packed. I can barely wait for the show to end, because the amphitheatre seats are about 50 percent smaller than the standard American seat. I am also almost asphyxiated by cigarette smoke.

One day we visit the beach. Watch a volleyball game that is intensely played. Take a short ride in a motorboat at an exorbitant price. Look for shells. Examine the insides of a plane that is permanently parked on the beach. Grab a meal, mostly seafood, which results in the explosion of my large intestine. Meet some kids on the beach and invite them to come with us to one of the numerous karaoke establishments that proliferate near the ocean. For twenty-Yuan or about \$2.50, we alternately belt out songs in English and Chinese for more than an hour to the loud, if often slow, beat of the accompanying music as we wait for our verbal cues and watch white women in brief bikinis scamper on the television screen before us.

More restaurants – many more restaurants – more chances for me to practice botching my chopsticks. We go to seafood restaurants, dumpling restaurants, Muslim restaurants. How the Chinese love their food! Sometimes I cheat and give my stomach a break and eat at Kentucky Fried Chicken. I guess my innards are better able to tolerate greasy chicken than seafood that is probably improperly handled.

Much of the rest of our tour is devoted to buying things. I must have been a trader in a previous life. I love to bargain, and the Chinese seem to love it that I love to bargain. What a rush it is to bargain a seasoned merchant down to one-third of his original asking price. Of course, seeing a foreigner the merchants undoubtedly add at least 50 percent to the price of a good. How delightful it is to buy trinkets in China – stone necklaces, jade horses, handmade cloth purses woven by minority tribeswomen, Tibetan scrolls and masks decorated with both angry and beneficent Buddhas, delicately carved teapots, a chess set with stone-carved pieces – all manners of baubles. Everything is so cheap and so tempting. I buy far too many things and as a consequence purchase another suitcase, itself at a cheap price, to transport my valuables back to the States.

In China, if you're an American, all the thrills are cheap, because prices, especially in the provinces, are generally geared towards people whose incomes rarely exceed \$200 a month. Unfortunately, I am still no closer to furthering my research objective.

My time with Lili is enjoyable. She is a bright young woman, who seems quite bored with her job as a computer programmer with a foreign multi-national that is teamed up with Chinese partners. By Chinese standards, she has a very good job. Indeed, many Chinese would consider it very advantageous to have such a job. But as one who shares her high expectations, I can understand why she feels bored. Her solution to her boredom and, may I add, her hopes for success are not unlike many other Chinese; she wants to study in the United States. She doesn't particularly like working with computers, but she is aware that many computer jobs in the United States are unfilled. Thus, she is willing to forego fulfillment and pursue a master's degree in computer science. What she lacks are the all-important contacts.

I guess that's how I could come in handy. Although I know nothing about computer science programs, I am a denizen of an American university and thereby hold a special allure. However, I'm not sure I can be much help. She won't be able to get a visa unless she receives a graduate assistantship. and she probably won't be able to

receive a graduate assistantship unless she is able to distinguish herself in some way with a particular computer sciences department. And she probably won't be able to distinguish herself unless she is able to meet with them in person, but that requires getting at least a short-term visa. This is, as they say, a sort of Catch-22.

After Lili returns to Guangzhou, my free time is preoccupied with waiting for a call from either Jian or Wang, hoping that either of them will have sufficient free time to negotiate the details of my proposed grant. There are only so many times when I can be amused by Chinese television shows, which often consist of either sappy soap operas, battling ninjas, local soccer games or especially droll news broadcasts, all of course, in Chinese. "The Voice of America" is slightly better. A week long special on the Oklahoma State Fair, more than saturates my interest in the state.

One afternoon I get a telephone call from Jian. Hope, as they say, springs eternal. I stroll down to the lobby of my dormitory to meet him. He is accompanied by She Zhengrong. As I sit down, the three of us are served tea by one of the dormitory's housekeepers.

"Professor Handrich, I want to introduce you to Professor She Zhengrong. He would like you to give some lectures."

"I am pleased to meet you. My dean has asked me if you could teach a course for us."

"A course! I'm not sure if I have enough time to teach a course. I am more prepared to give some lectures, but I'm just not prepared . . ."

"Our courses normally last only 20 hours."

"Only 20 hours? Is this a course offered through Dongtai University?"

"Not exactly. This course is offered by Big Ten University. They work in conjunction with Dongtai University."

"Big Ten University?"

"Yes Big Ten, have you heard of it?"

"Well, I've heard of the Big Ten, but that's an American athletic conference, not a university. Where is Big Ten based?"

"California. We have been associated with them for four years. At the end of two years, our students are awarded an associate degree from Big Ten."

"Why are you asking me to teach the course? Why not a faculty member from the university?"

"Our classes are taught in English, and frankly, they prefer American teachers. In addition, Big Ten requires that our instructors have a master's degree."

I am being played for a sucker. How can I say "no" when I'm in the process of trying to get their consent to cooperate on a grant and help me with my research? This Big Ten place is obviously some storefront operation. Am I willing to make this compromise?

"What course do you want me to teach?"

"Are you qualified to teach a course in accounting? We are most desperate to offer that course."

"I'm not qualified to teach accounting."

They don't even know that I can't even balance my checkbook.



“How about Organizational Communication or Introduction to Sociology?”

“Well, I’m not a sociologist, but I could probably wing the sociology course.”

“Wing?”

“I could teach it.”

“Are you available to start teaching the sociology course tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow!”

“Yes, if it is convenient for you, we would like you to teach it from 8:00 to 11:00 during the next seven days.”

“I don’t know about starting it tomorrow. I may have to work out some of the details on this grant I’m developing with Professors Wang and Yu.”

At this point, Jian interjects, “Professor Wang and I are still very busy with promotions.”

“Okay then, I’ll start tomorrow.”

“Here is the book.” She hands me a standard introductory sociology textbook that has been duplicated, undoubtedly without the consent of the publisher. “We can pay you \$1,500 for the course.”

“I don’t want any payment.”

“But surely, you must be paid.”

“No . . . no payment really.”

It’s bad enough that I agreed to teach this storefront university course in an area in which I am not qualified to teach and use a textbook that has been duplicated, but to receive money for teaching the course would just compound my academic sin. Damn . . . I’ve got to set some limits about what I’ll do to further my research.

“You serve as a good example – teaching courses for free.”

I wish that my motives were so noble. I’m teaching this course only because I don’t want to piss off Jian.

“The students will probably not have read any of the text by tomorrow.”

“That’s alright. There’s no way we’ll be able to finish this book within seven days anyway. By the way, Jian . . . do you think we’ll be able to talk soon.”

“Some time next week Professor Handrich,” he says with some irritation in his voice.

I retire to my room and watch Chinese soap operas. I leaf through the sociology textbook and make a rudimentary stab at developing a lesson plan for tomorrow. I couldn’t be less enthusiastic about teaching this course. Then, I take a short nap and wait until dinner.

Since I have no dinner plans, I decide to go to the faculty cafeteria. I’ve heard that the food in the cafeteria is considerably inferior to the food in the adjacent restaurant where I have been treated to several dinners. Going through the cafeteria line I point out to the servers various foods I would like to eat. The servers pile the food on my plate in heaping quantities. Unlike the cafeteria’s other patrons, one of the servers not only carries my plate to a table, but also pours my tea. I guess I have become a distinguished guest because of the company I keep.

Not knowing what to do with my eyes, I stare at my food. Unfortunately, it doesn't look or taste particularly appetizing. The adjoining restaurant's food is considerably better. A fellow from another table, a white fellow, conspicuous like me, joins me at my table.

"Hi. I'm Donald Milstead."

Donald is a young guy in his mid-twenties. He is dressed casually and both of his ears sport small earrings.

"Jack Handrich. What are you doing here?"

"I teach English courses. I've been doing it here for a few years. I used to be a Peace Corps volunteer in South Korea. I've been in Asia for over five years. At this point, I'm not sure I want to go back to the States. What brings you to Dongtai?"

"I'm trying to do research, but am finding it very difficult."

"Ah . . . everything is difficult over here. You get used to it after a while. What's the problem?"

"I'm trying to set up a faculty exchange program with some of my colleagues here, but they never have the time to meet with me. It's very frustrating."

"People are on a different time schedule over here."

"Evidently."

"You know it took them over four months between the time they interviewed me for the job and when they hired me."

"You're kidding me."

"I wish I was. I was fairly short on cash at the time. First, they flew me into Dongtai. Then, thinking I had the job I stayed in Dongtai . . . and waited. It's good it's so cheap to live here or else I might have resorted to making money illegally or begging. Who knows?"

"Why so long?"

"I don't know. They always told me that they were waiting to get approval from the authorities?"

"That's what they're telling me too."

"That seems to be their standard excuse. It's convenient isn't it? If they think they have to tell you 'no,' it puts off the responsibility on someone else – someone up the food chain who you'll never meet."

"Why don't they just tell you 'no.'"

"It's not in their nature. Better to slide around the issue. Look . . . if you don't mind me asking about your grant - what's in it for them? Why should they cooperate with you?"

"The chance to study in the United States – an opportunity for affiliation."

"They should like that."

"Yeah, that's what I initially thought."

"The more I learn about the Chinese, the less I know."

"Inscrutable Asians, huh?" I say with some irony.

"I know it sounds like a damn stereotype, but it sure seems to apply."

"Maybe I need to sweeten the pot a bit."

"How so?"

"My colleague's daughter is very interested in studying in the United States. Maybe I should suggest that she be part of the faculty exchange."

"That should whet his interest."

"There is a problem."

"What is it?"

"She's neither an academic, nor is she affiliated with this institution. That is a clear violation of the program rules."

"Details! If you don't know already, let me tell you about the importance of guanxi in sealing the deal around here."

"Guanxi?"

"Simply translated it means, I rub your back and you rub mine. It's a standard part of doing business in China and throughout Asia for that matter. That's why this place can be so bloody corrupt – too much guanxi. They don't know when to stop."

"Yeah, but I've already compromised myself in several ways."

"How much do you want this grant to go through?"

"I'm beginning to wonder."

"Well . . . if you're serious about it, you had better sweeten the offer to your colleague or else they may never meet with you."

"I'll think about it. In the meantime I'm teaching a course at Big Ten University. Have you heard of it?"

"Yes, unfortunately, they can't find anyone to teach their damn courses. They're damn desperate. I can't do it. They want people with master's degrees, and I only have a bachelor's degree. Most of the Chinese faculty on campus don't have a master's degree either. Besides, the students in their program demand American teachers. They should demand something. Their parents are paying about five times the tuition of the students at Dongtai University."

"Why do they choose to enroll in this program?"

"These are the students who couldn't hack it. They didn't pass the qualifying exams that are necessary to admit them to a Chinese university, and their parents are desperate to get them into some kind of university, bogus or otherwise. It helps if the university, at least purports, to be an American institution."

"Great!" I moan with exasperation.

"These kids come from middle class backgrounds. Most of their parents are businesspeople. Unfortunately, the students are a rather dull lot. Most of them would much rather play basketball and flirt with each other than do any serious school work."

"I wish I had spoken with you earlier. If I had known this, I might have thought of some elaborate reason for declining their invitation. Maybe you could explain something else to me. Do you know Wang Rongan?"

"I most certainly do. Watch out for that guy. And don't ever cross him."

"Wang doesn't seem very interested in pursuing the grant I've developed, but he's very eager to have me arrange for students at my university to study Chinese here. Why do you think?"

"Just a guess. I've heard rumors that Wang likes to skim money off the top. Last winter he reduced the heat in our building to 12 degrees Centigrade. It was damn cold. The residents of my building raised hell for two months before he did anything. I suspect that he pocketed the money that he saved in not sufficiently heating my building. He'll do the same thing if you bring students over here. He'll make money off their tuition, and he'll make money off the room and board he charges them."

"He can get away with that?"

"As long as he doesn't get caught. He'll probably get fired or worse if he gets caught. The Chinese government has just recently launched another one of their anti-corruption campaigns."

"Maybe I should emphasize to him that any faculty who come here from the States will stay in his dorms."

"There you go. Now you're thinking like a Chinese. It's hard to keep your hands entirely clean around here."

"Thanks for the advice."

"Don't mention it."

Jeff was right. The students in my Introduction to Sociology course are remarkably dull and uninteresting. This will be a long seven days. This crew doesn't even evince interest in coming to the United States – not that any of them would ever qualify for a graduate assistantship. Despite my best efforts to entertain, attendance falls off after the second day. I am forced to threaten the class with a quiz, to be offered at some unspecified time during each class period, in order to maintain some level of interest and ensure their attendance. I feel obliged to maintain some standards, even though I am engaged in an utterly corrupt process at an utterly corrupt university.

After another less than stimulating class, I sit in my room. The silence is interrupted only by indecipherable words coming from the television set. My boredom is broken by a telephone call from Jian.

"Professor Handrich?"

"Yes."

"This is Jian. We would like you to attend a wedding."

"A wedding? Who is getting married?"

"Someone on my staff. His name is Qiu Licai."

"But I don't know him."

"That's no problem. I know he would be honored if you attended."

"Well . . . okay I'll be there."

I guess this will be interesting. I've never attended a Chinese wedding. Maybe it will give me more insight into Chinese culture.

“Would you give a speech at the wedding?”

“A speech?”

“A speech honoring Qiu Licai and his wife.”

“I’ll try.”

“Good.”

“By the way, what would you think if we included Lili as a member of the faculty exchange. She’s not a faculty member, but maybe we could alter her resume. No one would have to know. This could be an opportunity for her to meet with faculties of various computer science departments. I would be willing to drive her around when she comes to the States on an exchange.”

“Yes, Lili very much wants to study in the United States.”

“Would Wang Rongan agree to this?”

“Yes.”

“We must not tell anyone else about this – not even my colleagues in the States. One other thing.”

“Yes.”

“Would it be difficult for Lili to change her last name? It may raise some suspicions when we apply for the grant and two of the participants share a last name. They would probably assume nepotism. And in this case they would be correct.”

“I will check.”

Several days later, my association with Big Ten University ends, and I reluctantly scribble my name on a grade sheet. My grade distribution looks something like a bell. I’m hoping that my signature won’t be decipherable.

The day my course ends is also the day of my wedding speech. The wedding is held at midday, shortly after my class concludes. Fortunately I have brought with me a seemingly endless supply of small gifts – one of these being an Indian arrowhead. That will be my gift to the bride and groom. But what significance does an Indian arrowhead have? I’ll have to think of something.

Qiu Licai and his bride-to-be are married in a banquet room adjacent to the faculty dining room. Many of the elements of their wedding are similar to a Western wedding. Unlike traditional Chinese weddings, where the bride wears red, this bride wears white. The groom is wearing a carefully fitted tuxedo. A band playing various tunes, including the Chinese national anthem, greets the couple at the entrance of the dining room. There are numerous toasts and a prolific amount of food. The department’s vice-chairman of the Communist Party, Han Rui, pronounces the necessary words to declare their marriage legal. There is one custom I don’t understand. Why do the bride and groom ceremonially bow towards each other and serially tap their heads together? No one provides me with a suitable explanation. Then it’s my turn. With an interpreter at my side, I play my part in the ceremony.

“This is the first time I have attended a Chinese wedding. I am very honored to be here at such a joyous occasion.”

Trite, but appropriate.

“I do not know either the bride or groom very well, but I can see they are very happy people and will undoubtedly have a very good life together.”

Muffled applause.

"I live in a part of the United States that used to be home to the Indians. I live in the State of Wyoming. It is a state with many tall mountains and broad plains. On those plains the Indians used to hunt buffalo, an animal that was sacred to them. I have brought something from Wyoming that I believe will ensure the bride and groom's happiness and good fortune. It is an Indian arrowhead – very old. In the United States, we consider it a good luck charm. Much like the arrowhead hits its target, the buffalo, it is my hope that your love will also hit its target."

I am immediately handed a small glass filled to the brim with alcohol. The couple and I toast each other before the cheering guests. Diplomacy is ascendant. Following the toast, I circulate throughout the room with Yu Jian Zhong, raising my glass at each table.

"Very good Professor Handrich," says Jian, "your presence and your speech provide these young people with good luck."

"I'm pleased to do it. By the way Jian, I hate to keep mentioning it, but I only have five days left in Dongtai. Do you think we can talk soon?"

"Perhaps in a few days."

Always tomorrow. Is this why the Third World will always, or for at least a long time in the future, remain the Third World?

I am invited to a table by Han Rui, the department's vice chairman of the Communist Party. He speaks little English. I speak even less Chinese. We spend the next two hours finishing a bottle of locally brewed Chinese liquor that claims to have healing powers. At first, I match his toasts in order to be polite. Later, I drink with him because I start to conclude that I really shouldn't give a damn anymore – whether it comes to my seemingly doomed research or for the sake of appearances.

Leaving my drunk fest with Han Rui, I run into Wang Rongan.

"Professor Wang, do you have time right now to discuss our grant proposal?"

Maybe it's the alcohol that makes me bold.

"Professor Handrich, we have told you many times that we are very busy. Do you understand? I have talked with the authorities. You cannot go to the villages. They will not permit it," Wang says with uncharacteristic forthrightness.

"Could we work out another arrangement?" I ask.

"Maybe village leaders could come here. We could train them here . . . in Dongtai."

"That might work."

"Something else, Professor Handrich. We trust you, but we don't know your colleagues you wish to bring here. Are they friends of China? We do not know that? Will they write lies about us?"

"You have my word that they are people with good intentions."

What have I just committed to? Am I to become an apologist for the Chinese regime?

"That is necessary. Perhaps we can talk about modifying the grant in two days."

Following my encounter with Wang Rongan, I stumble back to my room, turn on the television set, watch Chinese ninjas and then take a nap. After I wake up, slightly groggy, I get bored and decide to walk around campus. I wander around the rolling hills of the campus, always mindful of where I step. Yesterday, when I was not being so

watchful, I stepped on a crushed rat. Sometimes I forego a walk, because I am growing tired of being constantly stared at. Most of the students at Dongtai are first generation and are only recently removed from the countryside. The sight of a white face is still a curiosity to them.

Walking around the campus lagoon, I am confronted by three eager students.

“Professor Handrich, would you speak with us?”

“Sure.”

“We heard you speak several weeks ago. We are members of the English Club. Every week at this time we hold an English corner.”

“An English corner?”

“Yes, they held all over China. Here, we practice our English.”

“Very good!”

“Can we ask you questions?”

“Shoot – I mean go ahead.”

“Is it true that the United States is a utopia?” a very youngish girl asks me.

“It’s not quite that,” I retort in my adapted slow speech. “There are many good things in America, but we also have problems. For example, race relations remain a problem.” And on I go, trying to present a balanced portrait of the United States. Following this exchange, I get the standard questions:

Do you like Chinese food?  
How can I be admitted to an American university?  
What kinds of part-time jobs do American students get?  
How much does a car cost?  
Did you like the film “Titanic?”

One of the students does impress me. His name is Chen Hongyu. He’s in his fourth year of school. What physically distinguishes him from the others is that he is easily six feet tall and his hair, which stands up straight, makes him appear even taller. His English is more advanced than the other students and his questions are more penetrating. His questions reflect a creative mind, open to speculation – often a dangerous tendency in contemporary China. After several hours, when the others have had their need to speak and hear English sated, Chen Hongyu and I talk alone. Hongyu is from a village about 150 kilometers from here. His parents are both peasants who work a communal farm. They grow apples and tend a small herd of cattle.

After telling him of my research plans, he asks me, “Would you like to come to my village? I’m going there tomorrow.”

“That would be great.”

“I could serve as your interpreter. You could talk to my parents, their friends and some of the village leaders.”

“When can we leave?”

“I will meet you at the front gate at 6:00 AM.”

The next day I leave the dormitory at quarter to six. I tell no one of my secret trip to the village. They probably won’t miss me. Since the dormitory is locked all night until six in the morning, I have to rouse the young woman

who during the day maintains a watch at the main entrance of the dormitory. She is asleep in a small room adjacent to the front door and is cheerful, but slightly dazed at being awoken so early.

Our train trip is uneventful. I spring for first class seats, which provide us with a soft seat and just the two of us in our compartment, rather than a hard seat and four people. Hongyu considers the first class seats to be rather extravagant since we are traveling only 150 kilometers, but he is grateful for my gesture.

We are met at the station by his parents. His parents are surprised to see me, but seem to be pleased that I have accompanied their son. His father is almost toothless and about 50. His mother wears a constant smile on her wrinkled face and is slightly bent over. I hire a cab for the short passage to their village. For the next three nights, I will be a guest in their small house. Shortly after arriving at the village, they borrow a bed with a mattress from their neighbors for me to sleep on. The foreign guest must never sleep on the floor, even when he arrives unexpectedly.

My visit clearly appears to be the highlight of their year. As we drink tea, we are visited by a stream of admiring visitors who are more than curious about their American guest. They walk into my host's house, make a few muffled comments, not knowing that I can't understand what they are saying, even if they shout it, stare at me and then leave.

"Professor Handrich," says Hongyu, "I will need your passport, so that I can register you with the local authorities."

"Oh damn . . . I forgot to bring it. I forgot about the registration requirement. What should I do?"

"No one will probably notice, but don't mention it to anyone."

"No problem there. You're doing the translating."

Hongyu smiles.

"Do you think I can start interviewing some villagers tonight?"

"Yes, after dinner."

Hongyu's parents treat me to another sumptuous dinner. I am sure that it is far beyond their means. Unlike previous meals, I don't ask what each dish that I can't identify is, fearing that one of the unknown dishes that I am being served may be dog. The dinner is capped off with some of the local wine, which is actually quite drinkable.

"Would you like to meet our elected village leader? He sent word that he can meet with you at seven."

"I'm more than ready."

We stroll down the lane to a slightly more prosperous looking house that, unlike the other houses I have noticed, is adorned with a brass knocker. A small, curious crowd follows us. An intelligent man of 40 with round glasses that make him look a little like Hirohito answers the door.

"Professor, this is Qu Xiaohui. He is the leader of our village."

"Please come in," says Xiaohui in Chinese.

"Thank you for agreeing to speak to me. I am very interested in learning how your experiment with democracy is working."

"First, we will have some tea."

On cue, a woman who appears to be Xiaohui's wife, but who he does not introduce, brings in a tray with a pot of tea and three cups. She leaves the room briskly without saying a word.



“This is tea I have been saving for a special occasion. I am glad I finally can taste it. You are a teacher?” asks Xiaohui.

“Yes, I am a professor. I teach public administration at a school in the United States.”

“Public administration. That is something we need to learn about in this country. How long will you be in China?”

“I’ve been in China for three weeks already, but I hope to return for four months at the beginning of next year.”

“And do you like Chinese food?”

“Yes, very much.”

Our introductory exchange is interrupted by three sharp raps at Xiaohui’s door. At the door’s threshold stands a very attentive, smallish man beset with an officious manner. He is accompanied by two men in uniform. After some apparent reluctance, Xiaohui allows them to enter. Hongyu appears to be frightened by this intrusion that only increases my sense of dread.

“Hongyu, what’s happening?”

Hongyu is too startled to respond.

The officious official snarls at me and addresses Hongyu.

“Professor, he wants to see your passport.”

“Tell him I forgot to bring it with me. It was just an oversight.”

Upon hearing the translation, my apparent nemesis pounds his right fist into his left palm – a glancing blow.

“Professor, he wants you to come with him.”

“What’s going to happen?”

“He is going to arrest you.”

“Arrest me. Why?”

“You didn’t register.”

“That seems pretty trivial. On what charge?”

“They don’t need a charge. They just arrest you. You had better not argue. He is getting angry.”

“Can I make a phone call?”

“No phone call at the prison. And there is only one telephone in the village. It is broken.”

“Hongyu . . . you’ve got to call the American embassy or consulate for me. Here’s twenty dollars. Where is the prison?”

“About thirty kilometers from here.”

“Would you visit me after you’ve heard some news from the Americans?”

"I will try."

I can't relay any additional instructions to Hongyu, because the two policemen now grab each of my two arms and forcefully guide me outside. My admiring crowd, which previously monitored my every movement has retired to the safety of their homes. I am numb, thinking about all the things I should have done and start to speculate about what I should do. My hands are bound behind me with rope and through sign language I am told to keep my mouth shut. Displaying the demeanor of a humbled, beaten man, I willingly comply.

And that's how I got here. I haven't spoken with anyone from the American consulate. Hongyu hasn't visited me. I haven't spoken to anyone in English. Does anyone who matters even know that I'm here?

My cellmates remain nearly comatose. The rats seem to be getting bolder. The guards are oblivious to my requests. For recreation, I pick off the lice from my blanket. My bowels are starting to move. I am getting increasingly desperate.

And then, just like an old Western, the good guys appear at the pass. Unexpectedly, I see a white man in a crisp black business suit standing at my prison door. Is he an angel dressed in Armani, or is he an illusion? He says something in Chinese to the guard. The usually angry guard becomes suddenly compliant; he unlocks the door and motions me to get out.

"Dr. Handrich."

"Yes."

"I'm Tom Matson from the American consulate in Guangzhou. I understand you've been imprisoned here for the past few days. What happened?"

"I am a professor who was trying to do some research in a village nearby."

"Did you have permission from the authorities?"

"No, I was visiting the parents of a student of mine – just an informal visit."

"They have charged you with espionage."

"That's ridiculous. I just exchanged some pleasantries with the village headman."

"They don't like Americans wandering around their villages without explicit permission from somebody higher up. These villages are sort of semi-closed."

"I won't do it again."

"Well, that's a start."

"Can you get me out of here?"

"We can do it the long way and go through diplomatic channels. That should take a few more days. Or we can do it the short way and offer them a bribe."

"I don't have any money. They took my wallet. Do they take credit cards?" I ask facetiously.

"I have two hundred dollars on me for just this occasion."

"I'm good for it. My wife can wire me the money."

"Okay. I'll take up my offer to the warden. This bribe should provide his village with quite a good feast."

“Tell him I don’t want an invitation.”

“I won’t even mention it.”

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# The Only Jewish Bus Driver in San Antonio, Texas

*Judith Beth Cohen*

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With my bus full of workers, I drove over the bridge into San Antonio at five a.m. I looked back at the mass of brown faces chattering away in Spanish: all those early risers who sweep the hospitals, dump the trash, and work the fast food joints, lucky if they make minimum wage. Suddenly, as if I'd been whacked over the head, my life just stopped making sense. What was a New York Jew like me doing here? Who was I kidding? That's when I decided to head back east.

My troubles began when my relationship with Becky started heading downhill faster than I could get my bus through traffic. Radical politics had brought us to Texas. As itinerant organizers, we'd pick up and relocate whenever some new action on the left needed more hands. The Chicano Movement was really happening in San Antonio, so there we were: two twenty-eight-year-old suburban-college grads, willing to work our asses raw for peace, justice and the socialist way. At least one of us was. Becky's heart wasn't with the move, to put it mildly. She'd had it with the Movement. Instead, she found a job teaching retarded kids, finally putting her teaching degree to use. Why not? We didn't have to agree on everything; we weren't ideological clones.

San Antonio was great at first--mariachi music on the radio, hot Mexican food, living among folks who'd been here long before the U.S. conquered the Mexican army. My bus driver's job was a good gig after barely making a hundred bucks a week as an organizer. Hey, I thought we were on easy street: salaries, a car, a garden apartment with a swimming pool--not bad. My split shift left my afternoons free for meetings, handing out leaflets, peddling our movement newspaper. I wasn't complaining.

Early in the morning the bus garage would be bursting with Mexican dudes who'd known each other all their lives. Jorge, a driver who never took off his Spurs cap, would be standing on a table telling stories--the court jester of the bus garage. My Spanish wasn't great, but they all seemed to end with fucking burros, the kind of joke you'd hear in junior high. They'd crack up every time and I envied their camaraderie. Their laughing and kibbutzing warmed the place before the sun came up. No one was in a hurry--work felt like one big fiesta.

My bus route took me past a sixteenth century Spanish mission, and the famed Alamo. What a trip--I'd been a Davey Crockett fanatic when I was a kid and there I was, right where it all happened, though my heroic view of those guys had undergone a bit of revision. Heroes? Four hundred white guys trying to hold off fifteen thousand Mexicans, all to protect Texans' right to own slaves? Couldn't they come up with something more imaginative than a suicide mission? Those Alamo dudes were running so fast from their own personal disasters that a bloody, macho death must have seemed like an appealing alternative. Travis, their leader, had supposedly murdered his wife's lover; Davey Crockett had lost an election and abandoned his family. Yep, our American idols--criminals, sociopaths, murderers, and worst of all, stupid. But why spoil the romance?

Becky and I had been together for five years when she started complaining about our "level of communication." According to her, the level had been plummeting. Politics were all I cared about, (so she claimed). And I was much too repressed, emotionally speaking.

"Look at you," she lectured me. "Your mother died of cancer, your only brother's in a mental hospital, your dad just married a woman you can't stand, but you're always terminally cheerful, as if everything's just peachy."

Did she want me to rip off my clothes and walk around in mourning? Was I so wrong to feel detached from all that family shit? I'd left home, in spirit anyway, at sixteen. In college I got caught up in the peace movement, read Marx and began to understand how companies like General Motors and GE run the country. My family problems seemed pretty trivial by comparison. I couldn't take away my mother's cancer, I told Becky. Neither could I fix my brother, but maybe I could help change the sick system that produced all this misery. In college, Becky had pushed me to join the Movement. It was her idea to become full-time organizers--now she was losing her patience.

To be fair, she had a point. Most of our socialist comrades were hard-nosed types, not much touchy-feely going on. You had to maintain discipline if you were serious. We could have been Talmudic rabbis the way we debated strategies for reaching the workers. Becky got fed up with all the hairsplitting about doctrinal issues.

"How can you bring about a revolution if you care more about theories than real people?" she said. Somehow, the theories and the people had seemed more in synch when all this started. I was beginning to sense, deep in my gut, that love and sex and personal pain aren't just creations of the idle ruling class. Now I was finding out the hard way.

When Becky suggested that we live separately and date others, I didn't get too bent out of shape. At the time I was caught up in a strike action by a renegade group of sanitation workers. It was exciting--this breakaway bunch was protesting the shit wages they were paid, and none of the unions would support them. When the city hired unemployed blacks as scabs to work the sanitation jobs, we city bus drivers were supposed to pick them up in a different location every day. Then no one could organize a picket line. I figured I could get tight with the drivers in my union and convince them not to carry the scabs. So I gave them my spiel about the common enemy, worker solidarity and all. As for me, I was still on my six-month probation period and if I refused to drive, I'd have no union protection. Besides, someone had to talk to the blacks who were being used against the union, so why not me?

I'd be driving, the only white guy on the bus, going on about minorities sticking together, how they'd be ditched as soon as the strike was over, how no one won this way. All the way to the garbage trucks, I'd spin my rap. One day, after I let them off, this one guy hung back. Wow, a convert, I thought, waiting for him to say something. This black dude just looked me over with a very puzzled expression on his face. Oh, oh, a company spy, I thought. He'll blow the whistle and get me thrown off the job for being a commie. The air-conditioning was blasting away but I was swimming in sweat. Finally, he came out with it.

"What ARE you?" he said. He squinted, trying to get a fix on me. I figured he meant: You a Trot, a Maoist or what, so I hedged.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I mean, Italian or WHAT?" Man, was I relieved!

"Jewish," I said. I could have broken into a chorus of Havana Gila on the spot. He shook his head, like it just didn't compute. Then, as if he'd suddenly gotten my number, he summed it all up in a voice so solemn you'd think he was at a funeral.

"Man, you REALLY f\*\*\*ed up, didn't you?"

Later I laughed like crazy when I repeated the story to Becky.

"Maybe he's right," she said. Becky was beginning to sound just like my Dad. That's what he thought, and we rarely spoke. His own Russian immigrant father got thrown out of the painter's union for being a socialist. Then he couldn't get work. My dad's response was to be as straight arrow as possible. He worked his ass off for a cleaning business

until he was able to buy the company, but after he became boss, his life deteriorated completely. Nothing but aggravation--he was never home, unless his sciatica acted up from all the stress.

Our first falling out came when I was thirteen or so. In junior high, some black kids moved to our white suburban neighborhood and this creep of a social studies teacher took to badmouthing them with racist remarks, saying they'd never do more than eat watermelon or shine our shoes. I stood up to that asshole; I told him everyone had equal rights in this country, in case he hadn't read the textbook. The kids looked at me as if I'd blown it. The Nazi called me in after school and made me bring my dad. Then he denied the racist slurs, said I was making it all up, that I didn't know my place and better learn or I'd never get anywhere in life. I expected my dad to stand up and tell him how out of line he was, but he believed the teacher. No matter what I said, Dad kept telling me to mind my own business and stay out of trouble. But I wouldn't back down. Back home he hit me for the first and last time. From then on, I was estranged from my family. Just a little kid, I'd go off on my bike alone, riding for miles all over Long Island, coming home only to eat. My parents hardly seemed to notice.

When I burned my draft card during Vietnam, my dad freaked out for the second time; he was terrified that I'd get thrown in jail. Little did he know I'd already been arrested in a draft board sit-in. You could say that I've been on the road more or less ever since I graduated from college. Only twice did I go back east: once for my mother's funeral, then a few years later for my dad's wedding. At the party, Aunt Bessie, Dad's only sister, cornered me, and grilled me about being single.

"What are ya? A fag or something?" she asked in her best Brooklynese. I explained about Becky and expected a sermon about living in sin. Instead she told me I'd developed quite a southern accent.

My brother flipped out right after my mother died, although he'd been showing signs for some time.

Randy was eight years younger, and I'd never had much to do with him when we were kids. After they diagnosed him, my dad called. We hadn't spoken since my mom's death and it was awkward--he never was much of a talker. I could hear him fighting back tears as he told me how bad things were with Randy. He'd get calls from him at all hours threatening suicide, then he'd slam down the phone. His therapists didn't give much hope--they said he'd always be on medication, probably never live a normal life. Dad wanted me to do something, but really, what can anyone do?

I liked having the apartment to myself after Becky moved out. We'd get together now and then for a "date," and stroll along the river walk. I'd put my arm around her as if we were newly in love. Usually, she'd go back to my place and we'd make love with hungry passion, just like when we first met. I don't know why sex was hotter when we weren't a couple, but it was. I could still talk to Becky--she let me go on and on about the strike, even if her heart wasn't with the Movement anymore. I tried not to guilt trip her for joining the bourgeoisie, but I couldn't hide my disapproval.

"There's more than one way to work for the common good," Becky said. She talked about the screwed up kids she worked with. Though I could see her point, her way seemed so damn indirect. I did try dating other women--Becky's idea; it sounded good to me--romance with someone new, plus great times in bed with your old lover. Hey, why not? But my efforts in that direction added up to no more than a big zero. First, I met this Chicana environmental activist who invited me back to her place. Very promising, until I saw the crucifixes on her walls and figured we'd never get to first base. What a revelation--that you could be on the left and still believe all that religious mumbo jumbo. I hadn't heard about Liberation Theology then--what I didn't know could have filled volumes. Sometimes, I think ignorance is a blessing. Anyway, I just couldn't get turned on with Christ watching, so I didn't see her again.

Next, I met an Azerbaijani Iranian studying in Texas, though I never learned why she picked San Antonio. In her eyes, belly dancing was a liberating form of expression for women in repressive cultures, and she practiced it herself, wearing lots of silver jewelry and filmy scarves. I thought I'd gone to heaven, but I guess she just felt sorry for me. Actually we did have something in common, she being a non-Moslem Moslem, me a non-Jewish Jew. Besides, we both loved Eric Clapton's guitar playing, but I guess there was no chemistry between us. After we made love, she seemed about as interested in me as a vegetarian would be in a hot dog. I'd barely finished when she popped up, and said: "Let's go out to eat." So much for sex.

Becky and I were on one of our weekly dates when she told me about Casper. I'd been complaining about driving the scabs to work. The sanitation guys had lost their battle. No big victories for the working class this time around. Becky lifted lettuce piece by piece from her salad, as if she had to fondle each one before putting it in her mouth. She'd gotten into health foods, fasting and coffee enemas, which were supposed to purge your body of toxins and make you a new person. Hell, why not, I'd even try it if she asked me to. Then she told me how she'd run into this guy at the meat counter of the Win Dixie. His name was Caspar and she couldn't have come up with anyone less like me if she'd invented him.

He asked her advice on selecting a roast, and she told him tofu would be healthier, so he invited her out for coffee to hear more, and she agreed, as long as they had herbal tea. That's when he told her that he found her irresistible; he'd fallen in love with her at the meat counter. She ate it up--I can't believe how some guys get away with these lines. Becky's what you might call "cute," about five feet tall, maybe ninety pounds with a head of black, fuzzy curls. Not exactly cover girl material. Casper was over six feet, about twenty years her senior, and get this, a Baptist minister, a widower with four teenage kids. Could she take him seriously? I figured she was hungry for attention and would drop him fast. I mean, I can understand the lure of flattery--who wouldn't want to hear how gorgeous she is. I never told her that. But a forty-eight year old minister? Becky laughed too, but I noticed a sparkle about her that hadn't flickered for a long time.

Needless to say, nothing happened with the Chicano union's strike. The garbage men went back to work without getting a single demand met. The blacks were dumped, just as we said they would be, and worst of all, Becky told me she was moving in with Casper, a guy whose answering machine says: "God loves you!" How could she do it--a woman who was once second in command of the Young Socialists? Becky seemed absolutely sure of her decision.

We had one last time alone, Becky and I. There in Ranchito Salsa, I broke down and sobbed like I never had--ironic since a display of emotion was what she'd been asking for all along. There I was drowning in the burst dam, and it was too late. She just let me cry. When I got over it, she hugged me, very mature and maternal as if she were my great aunt.

Two weeks after this explosion, I had my five a.m. epiphany in the center of San Antonio. That's when I decided to pack my crummy Datsun and head back east. I called Becky to let her know, hoping I wouldn't get that damn Jesus tape. She said I'd made a good decision, maybe I'd make peace with my Dad, patch up some family rifts.

"What about your family?" I asked. "You weren't exactly on the best of terms." Becky had her own pair of neurotic parents back in New Jersey.

There was a silence. "I haven't told them about Casper yet," she said. "I will when the time is right."

"Haven't told them--what if they call and get his message?"

"I didn't give them our number."

I asked to see her before I left town and she agreed, but this time it was a threesome. Casper came along as chaperone. I guess one crying jag was about all she could deal with from me. He seemed like a nice enough guy, sort of warm and gooey. Actually, I was touched that she wanted me to meet him. Seeing her so happy made me feel better about leaving. It was time to go my own way so I gave notice at the bus company and said goodbyes to my political comrades. It surprised me when the Chicanos in the garage told me they'd miss me.

"You know, before I met you, I'd never known any white guys," Jorge said.

"What about cops or mailmen or doctors?" I asked.

"All Mexican," he said. Then I thought about growing up back in Queens. I must have been ten before I figured out that everyone in New York wasn't either Jewish or Italian.

On my final morning run, this guy in training was riding my bus to learn the route. I didn't pay much attention when a squat muscular dude with a Texas accent, who'd just gotten out of the military, told me he'd served in Vietnam. I

was too tired to engage him in a political rap—my mind already working out the best route cross country. As I drove past the Alamo for the last time, I thought about the sanitation strike, how I'd cared so much about a lost cause, just like those stubborn hold-outs inside the fort, but at least I knew when to quit.

After we were back in the garage, the new driver wanted to talk.

"So," he starts. "You Jewish or what?" He glared at me, the tattoos on his forearms probably cursing me in Vietnamese.

"What's it to you?" I asked, gearing myself up for some kind of confrontation. To me being Jewish isn't a religion--it's an ethnic thing, like being Mexican. Was he about to give me a hard time for killing Christ?

"Hey, don't get excited," he said, pointing to himself. "I'm Jewish too. Last name is Baron, Herb Baron. Coincidence, Huh?"

I did a strange thing then--I grabbed this fellow f\*\*\*-up, soon to be the only Jewish bus driver in San Antonio, Texas and crushed him in a bear hug. Then, the two of us crossed over to the Toot Toot Tap Room for our own farewell party.

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Ms. **Judith Beth Cohen** is an established writer. Her fiction has appeared in numerous journals, including *580 Split*, *The Larcom Review*, *The Best of Rosebud*, *The North American Review*, *New Letters*, and *The High Plains Literary Review*. In 1984, she published a novel "Seasons." Recently, she has won a Writer's Digest Fiction award.

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