

## **From Teachers to Professors: A Tale of Identities, Ideologies, Change, Conflict and lots of other good Organizational ‘Stuff’ (a work of ethnographically informed scholarly fiction)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Drawing upon the genre of ethnographic fiction, this paper explores the challenges that occur when third- and fourth-tier colleges and universities seek accreditation from AACSB. Deans and change leaders normally see the process of achieving accreditation in terms of bureaucratic and behavioral change. This paper argues that more focus must be placed on understanding how the demands of accreditation challenge faculty members’ self-image. Therefore, achieving accreditation requires individuals to have a change in their self-identity so that behavioral change can follow.

**Key words:** AACSB Accreditation, Change, Subjectivity, Identity

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 1994, the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, and now renamed the Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business, International) made a significant revision to their accreditation standards. Prior to the 1994 revision, the accreditation standards were tailored to schools of business that were research oriented or research intensive. The pre-1994 standards purposely excluded both smaller and teaching oriented programs and schools of business. This exclusionary practice created a market opening for an alternative business accreditation agency, the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), which saw its membership and number of accredited programs rapidly expand. To stem the intrusion of ACBSP into its market and brand equity, in 1994 AACSB released new ‘more flexible’ standards where criteria for accreditation of particular schools were to be “mission driven” (McKenna, Cotton, and Van Auken, 1997), expanding AACSB’s market domain to include formerly excluded smaller and teaching oriented business schools (McKenna, Cotton, and

Van Auken, 1997; Durand and McGuire, 2005).

In concert with its expansion of its domain, like many other accrediting agencies (Johnson, Johnson, Ferenga and Ness, 2005), AACSB also began to aggressively market its “brand”. Thus, whether or not a school could display the “AACSB Accredited” seal on their websites, advertisements and other printed materials, became an element of competition between programs when recruiting students, prospective employers and prospective donors. As a result of the domain expansion facilitated by the new “mission driven” standards and the aggressive marketing of the of the AACSB brand, what was a rather small and exclusive club of approximately 250 accredited programs has grown at exponential rates, so that AACSB estimates that within the next 10 years, roughly 75 percent of all business programs will be accredited by AACSB. Thus under the pressure of the change in their competitive environment, business schools that would have either considered ACBSP accreditation<sup>9</sup> or schools that would not have considered accreditation at all in the past are now either accredited, in the

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<sup>9</sup> One large segment of schools currently seeking accreditation is those that have already been accredited by ACBSP and who are now in the process of “switching horses.”

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process of seeking accreditation, or exploring how they will achieve accreditation by AACSB.

For this new cohort of aspirants to AACSB accreditation, achieving this goal requires significant organizational and culture change. Typically, deans and other leaders of this change see the process as two distinct processes. The first are a number of bureaucratic changes, usually related to curriculum alignment, course offerings and sequences, and prerequisite structures. Courses often need to be added to the required curriculum while others, often offered for years, need to be dropped. The other mode of change that is often perceived is behavior change on the part of the faculty. AACSB requires that all faculty demonstrate currency in their field through the participation in activities that have “intellectual contributions” to the faculty member’s discipline as their outcome. Thus all faculty are expected to attend conferences, give presentations and publish in proceedings and other venues. While the standards are written broadly, the practice of the accrediting agency is to expect that all faculty periodically publish a peer reviewed journal article. Naively, Deans and other change leaders see the process of getting faculty who have either not recently published or who have never published to publish as a problem of behavioral change. Resistance to change, in the form of objecting to have to publish, is often couched in arguments about additional work requirements and prior work commitments – “I already have so much to do, and now they want me to publish, too.” Typically the change leader’s response is to try to overcome this resistance with extrinsic rewards and punishments, which rarely seem to motivate the appropriate behavior.

This paper will suggest another interpretation. Rather than seeing the needed changes as behavioral, I will suggest that the changes brought on by the requirements of AACSB accreditation must be seen in light of the changes that are

required in the self-identity of the faculty who see accreditation as threatening.

### A NOTE ON GENRE

What follows is a short piece of ethnographic fiction (Hecht, 2007; Narayan, 1999; Schmidt, 1984). After the challenges to practices of ethnographic writing put forth in the classic *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus, 1986), many ethnographers have been exploring and experimenting with alternative forms of writing (Ellis and Bochner, 1996; Goodall, 2000; Reede-Danahay, 1997). Ethnographic fiction draws upon the author’s ethnographic and auto-ethnographic experience and, like historical fiction (Hecht, 2007), creates a narrative that allows for the representation of a situation that collapses many disparate, but real, episodes and people into a coherent narrative. Thus Podunk is at once a place and not a place and many places. The same can be said of all the characters represented here. They are real people and not real people and composites of many people. As to using ethnographic fiction for the purpose of organizational research, like Watson (2000), my purpose here is to present a story that allows both the writer and the reader to have analytic insight into real organizational processes that would not “have the clarity of pattern and logic of unfolding” (Watson, 2000, p.497) if a more traditional form of reporting of qualitative data were used.

### PROLOGUE...

*Life was about to change for the Faculty of Business at Podunk University. The old president was gone, and the new one had arrived. The old dean of the Business Faculty realized his days were numbered and “retired to pursue other career opportunities.” And then the announcement came, a new dean had been appointed and the College of Business was given its marching orders – achieve AACSB<sup>10</sup> accreditation, or, else!*

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<sup>10</sup> The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (formerly, American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business)

Where to begin? All stories need a beginning, but, at the same time, all stories begin somewhere before the beginning. Maybe this story began three years ago, or maybe 15, or maybe 27 years ago. Or, did it begin in 1866. It is hard to tell. So, we will begin when P.<sup>11</sup> arrived at Podunk.

In years past...

P. had come to Podunk by chance. He had been teaching for seven years at that point. That was 15 years ago. He wanted to relocate and Podunk was just a little beyond the place where he wanted to stay. He looked at the map, "Oh, not too bad of a drive." There were dozens of schools in the area, he must have applied to most of them, several nibbles, but Podunk took the bait, and made a relatively decent offer. So P. went to Podunk. P. did not stay in Podunk. He drove there each of his teaching days – about 45 minutes in the car. There was no direct route to Podunk, so he experimented the first year with different routes, until he found the shortest. New Englanders have a saying, "you can't get there from here," that was certainly Podunk. While pretty enough, it was in the middle of 'nowhere,' somewhat isolated, and hard to get to. Maybe that was a metaphor for the College of Business and faculty, an not just a description of the school's location. P.'s new colleagues were nice enough, but they too were isolated and insular.

P. quickly learned what life in the Faculty of Business would be like.

"Yeah, the dean was really impressed with your c.v.. All those presentations and the article you have," So began Z.. "and when you go for tenure, those people in Liberal Arts will think it is good, too."

Not to be outdone, O. broke in on Z. and continued, "But we think all that stuff is bullshit and resume padding. Yeah, 'cutting

edge research.'" It was clear that Z. agreed, and O. smirked as they walked away.

P. was not that naïve, he knew that the focus of Podunk was teaching undergraduates. And he knew the history of the place. Founded in a rural setting in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century for the purpose of training teachers for rural schools. Podunk evolved from institute, to teacher's college, to college, to university status. He knew about the students, too. Most came from towns under 50 miles away, and to put it politely, the admission standards were not the most rigorous. He had been warned. P.'s partner, G. had gone to secondary school near where they now stayed. In G.'s day, the saying was, "If you can't get into a university, you can always go to Podunk."

So P. knew that the core of his job would be teaching, but he was still surprised at the level of hostility there was towards research and, as he would find out over time, faculty who did research, in the Faculty of Business.

As for the teaching, there were things to be learned there, too. "The people who write the textbooks are experts," began Z. "If they put a topic in the book, then it must be important, and our students need to know it. It's not for you," at this point Z. was scolding P., "to decide which topics to teach and which not to teach."

P. was stunned. First, the textbook had 20 different chapters and topics, and the semester only had 14 weeks, so clearly something would have to go. But more to P.'s sense of self, he had suffered through hundreds of hours in The Professor's doctoral seminars on the topic, so he certainly felt that he enough expertise to know which chapters were more central and important than others.

"But, how can you cover 20 chapters in 14 weeks?" P. asked.

Annoyed, Z. responded, "You don't have to cover them all in the classroom, but the students should read all the chapters and there should be questions about them on your exams."

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<sup>11</sup> with apologies to Franz Kafka, but life at Podunk was surely *Kafkaesque*.

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It would be some years until P. actually understood the whole meaning of this exchange with Z.

P. had come to Podunk at a time when the university, in general, and the Faculty of Business, in particular, were beginning a significant transition. About 25 years earlier, the University had rapidly expanded and more than half the current faculty had been hired within a 3 year period. As P. arrived, the University was preparing for several waves of retirements. Those retirements would change the face of Podunk forever.

The Faculty of Business was also changing. Having been founded about 15 years prior to P.'s arrival (business was a late arrival in Podunk's history), it would not see retirements for some time. But enrollments were growing and the faculty had added the MBA to its degree offerings, so there would be new hires. In the beginning, or at least, in the beginning for the Faculty of Business, Business was an appendage of Economics. According to the economist D., the economists who hired the first Business faculty had decided that they never wanted these new hires to dominate the department, so they hired people who held only the MBA so that they (the new hires) would be forever at the bottom of the faculty ranks. By the time that P. arrived at Podunk, life was changing, as were the hiring practices. Business had grown and now was separate from Economics. It had its own college, with four departments, of which Economics was now the smallest. New hires minimally had to have a PhD in progress (if not in hand), and to the (unstated) dismay of the 'senior' colleagues, they were appointed to the middle of the faculty ranks. Credentials notwithstanding, however, it was clear that P. and the other new faculty were hired to *teach* business. Any aspiration that these new faculty might have to engage in scholarship was ridiculed by the senior faculty, who felt that real disciplinary expertise rested with the authors of the textbooks that were being used. The only expertise that the new hires were expected to gain was in classroom

teaching, where the senior faculty were the role models.

During the years that P. was at Podunk the university, although not the Faculty of Business, changed. Older faculty retired and new faculty came. The older non-business faculty at Podunk had often been from the area, gone to Podunk, taught in secondary school, then went to State (the local research university) and did a PhD, and then came back to Podunk to play their part in the repetition of the cycle. But the '90s were not a good time for liberal arts and sciences PhDs, at least as far as the job market was concerned. New hires outside the Faculty of Business came to Podunk with degrees from major universities and c.v.'s with numerous (and often prestigious) publications. In some ways, Podunk was being transformed into a 'real university.' This transition went unnoticed by the vast majority of the individuals in the Faculty of Business, as a result of being the most insular in a traditionally insular place.

Over the years that P. taught at Podunk, life went on unchanged inside the Faculty of Business.

And then...

"Did you read your e-mail yet this morning?" asked Q. in an excited tone.

"No, I just got in," answered P.. "Is there something important?"

"President N. has just announced that he will be retiring at the end of the academic year. There is going to be a search for a new president starting immediately," replied Q..

"I wonder what we will get next?" muttered P. in a less than optimistic tone.

President N. had done a wonderful job at raising money for renovating the current campus and building several new buildings. But everyone on campus acknowledged that he was not very interested in what was happening academically. His provost was weak, and the academic

mission of the university had been drifting without a helmsman for years. Thus, while the credentials of the faculty had been improving over the years, academically, to be honest, Podunk was still someplace a student could attend if they could not get into university.

Several weeks later ....

“Did you see it?” asked Q.

“See what,” replied P.

“The advertisement in the Chronicle for the President’s search,” answered Q.

“No I didn’t. Anything interesting? Or is it going to be the same old, same old?” P. responded in a skeptical tone.

“Well look at this,” Q. pushed a copy of the advertisement towards P., “achieve AACSB accreditation.”

“My, my,” P.’s eyebrows were raised as he looked at the advertisement, “someone might actually be serious about this, this time.”

Over the previous 12 years, P. had been in several meetings at Podunk where accreditation had been a topic. Those discussions were often short lived. Once in a while there might be some motion that looked like the option was being seriously considered, but that never had come to anything. It was clear that neither President N., nor Dean S. were really committed to the idea. But now there was to be a new President.

“I wonder how Dean S. feels about this?” smirked P.. Both he and Q. laughed.

“I wonder how long old S. will even be around, with this in the works. He hasn’t wanted to do if for the last 10 years, think he will want to do it now?” It wasn’t really a question that Q. was posing, both Q. and P. knew the answer.

Both Q. and P. had thought that accreditation would be a good idea, but they were in a clear minority in the Faculty of Business. Q. had been a member of the Faculty of Business at Podunk for about nine years. He had PhD in a quantitative subject and had an impressive list of publications. In the nine years at Podunk he quickly moved through promotion to the top ranks in the faculty.

“Did you see the advertisement?” The buzz around the Faculty of Business was unmistakable. “Are they serious, AACSB?”

The first day of the next academic year...

“Did you hear? President X. is coming to the Dean’s meeting at 11 o’clock, something must be up!” W. had been at Podunk for almost 25 years. He had been one of the first business faculty that the economists had hired.

This would be the first meeting that the Faculty of Business would have with the new president. He had arrived mid-summer, and rumor was that he was already making changes.

“Good morning, and welcome back to a new school year,” President X. started in a rather formal and scripted tone. “I asked Dean S. to come and speak to you this morning because we have a very important matter at hand. Among the mandates that I have received is to achieve AACSB accreditation for the Faculty of Business. I know that there have been discussions here at Podunk in the past about this matter, but I want to make it clear today that it is time to stop talking about accreditation and time to beginning working towards this goal. I believe that it is reasonable to believe that the Faculty of Business can achieve this goal and become accredited in a time frame not to exceed the next seven years.”

There was a noticeable silence in the room.

“Are there any questions?” President X. continued after a pause.

W. spoke right up without waiting to be recognized, “President X. can you tell me how

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achieving accreditation will make me a better teacher?"

"Well," President X. began to respond immediately, as if he had anticipated this question, "accreditation is about more than teaching and the quality of the teaching. Accreditation is an indicator that outsiders believe that you have a high quality program."

"President X., " this question came from T., a faculty member who did have a PhD, "I have been at accredited schools, accreditation is very expensive, do we have the money for this?"

Again, President X. seemed prepared, "The cost of accreditation is certainly a challenge; but we are beginning to build that into the future budgets and the resources will become available."

Surprisingly, there were no more questions. Most likely the faculty were still possessing the President's announcement.

"Dean S., I will turn your faculty back over to you, now. Thank you everyone for your time and attention." With this, President X. left the room.

W. immediately spoke up, "Well, you can work on accreditation all you like, but I am just going to come and teach my classes, just like I have been doing."

This outburst was met with some approving nods and grunts.

"We no longer have a choice in this matter," started Dean S..

"No choice?!" came a voice from somewhere in the back of the room.

"No, no choice," continued Dean S. "The part that the President did not tell you, but that he told me, is that if the Faculty of Business does not make significant progress towards

accreditation in the next 3 or 4 years, the plan is to close the college."

Needless to say, there was stunned silence.

From the rear of the room, "They wouldn't do that! Would they?....."

For the next several weeks...

...hallway talk focused on one and only one thing – accreditation.

"I am a good teacher, I don't need some good housekeeping seal to prove that," grumbled W.

B. agreed with him, "Our students get good jobs, we must be doing something right."

"I was hired here to teach," objected R., a DBA who had not written anything in the 25 years since he earned his degree. "I know how to do research, and I could do it, but that's not what they pay for."

"And this bull about research," with an annoyed tone in his voice, O. continued, "like people around here are going to do research that isn't just crap."

"I didn't come to Podunk to be an '*intellectual*', I don't want to be an '*intellectual*,' I want to teach the kids." J. put on what he believed to be a snooty accent each time he pronounced the word '*intellectual*.'

J. was an interesting case. Having left a job in industry, he spent several years teaching part time at one or another institution. He had been a education major in college, but went to industry because of the low pay as a teacher. But what he really wanted to be was a classroom teacher. He even went as far as to enroll in Cyber University to obtain his doctorate. Although he was hired at Podunk because he was *Dr. J.*, he had no interest in being an academic.

L. one of the few long term faculty with a PhD spoke for another constituency, "I have published articles when I worked at State. That

takes a lots of time, when am I going to do that here with teaching all those students and with no graduate assistant?" Like a small group of others, L. had come to Podunk to escape the world of 'publish or perish' and had fallen into Podunk's teaching culture.

Traditionally at Podunk, research was neither valued nor rewarded. One could be tenured and promoted based upon the quality of their teaching and the amount of service they dedicated to the university. In the Faculty of Business, emphasis was on the practical and useful; and there was little patience for the theoretical. At some level, the 'culture' was almost anti-intellectual. The idea of research was scoffed at and rude comments could occasionally be heard about those few faculty, such as Q. who did engage in research.

Several weeks pass...

Many speculated whether President X. would really close down the college. The Faculty of Business taught over 20% of Podunk's students. Many figured that if they just "didn't go along with it," President X. would drop this "silly" idea. And then the other shoe dropped.

"S. got a new job, he's gone at the end of the month!" The news ran like wildfire through the halls. Dean S., the former president's "favorite," was leaving. The news came out of nowhere. The murmur became a roar.

"I am not surprised," Q. quipped to P., "he stalled and avoided the issue of accreditation for over 10 year, do you think he was going to buy-in now?"

"I wonder if he quit, or if he was pushed?" answered P.

"My money is on *pushed*," smiled Q.

A month later...

The announcement in memorandum that was placed in everyone's mailbox read

Faculty of Business  
Important Meeting with President X.  
Tuesday at 11 am  
Business Lecture Hall  
All Tenured and Tenure Track Faculty Must Attend

No other information, so it must have been important.

At the appointed time, President X. entered the room and immediately began, "Thank you for coming to this meeting on such short notice. I have a brief announcement that I wanted to make in person. I have been speaking with Dr. V., and she has agreed to take the position as Dean of the Faculty of Business, starting immediately." The rumors were confirmed to be true; talk of this had been in the hallway for a week.

Dr. V., now Dean V. had come to Podunk seven years previously. She had a top degree and a good publication record. She had been at AACSB accredited schools prior to coming to Podunk, and did not need to be convinced of the merits of accreditation.

"I am confident," continued President X., "that Dean V. is the right choice to guide the Faculty of Business through the accreditation process. Dean V. and I have spoken extensively about this in the last few days, and she will be laying out the time table for this task for you today." With that, President X. exited the meeting without further comment.

With that, Dean V. began her presentation explaining what the Faculty of Business would need to accomplish to achieve accreditation and the initial timeline for when these tasks would need to be completed.

In the months that followed...

"Okay," started Q. as he convened the first meeting of the Research Committee, "our job is to encourage our colleagues to do research."

There was an air of amusement around the table, both P. and U., an economist who had

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recently joined the Faculty, both smiled. The three looked at one another knowingly, and P. actually chuckled.

“Did you use Podunk and research in the same sentence?” P. chided with more than a small tone of sarcasm in his voice. Everyone laughed.

“Well, it is going to be tough,” Q. continued, “but as I see it, there are three groups of folks here, those who already do research...”

“Yeah, and we are all sitting around this table now,” blurted out U.

“...and there are one or two more,” Q. responded, keeping control of the conversation. “The second group are those who have done research in the past, like L., but haven’t done any since coming to Podunk; and the third are those who have never done any research.”

P. then interjected, “Keep in mind that that third groups is really two different groups.”

“How so?” asked U.

P. continued, “Well there are those like R. who have their doctorates and could do research; and then there are those like W. and O. who only have MBAs and have never been trained nor expected to do research.”

“That last group is the real problem,” began U.. “For those who have, but not recently, or could, but never had, we just need to find the right incentives.”

“Spoken like the economist you are, my man,” P. joked.

“But that last group, you’re right. They’ve all been here a long time, and probably have no clue how to do research, I don’t know what you do with them,” U. looked bemused as he considered what he had just said.

Meanwhile...

“You know, the real problem around here? There aren’t a lot of carrots, and there are even fewer sticks,” Dean V. began. “These faculty have figured out in a hurry that if they don’t want to do anything beyond their teaching and committee work, there *isn’t* a lot I can do about it.”

In the few weeks that had followed her becoming Dean, V. realized that the Faculty was divided into three distinct groups when it came to the accreditation efforts. There was a small but committed group who believed in accreditation. This group consisted of individuals who were either openly doing research, like Q., P. and U., or a couple of individuals who were “in the closet” about their activities. V. was surprised when she became aware of these folks. Then there was the second group, long term faculty, who really didn’t believe in the accreditation effort, but took the threat of closing the college seriously. They would do, albeit minimally, what had to be done to get by. V. figured that this would have to be “good enough.” But then, then there was that third group.

When V. went to her first AACSB accreditation seminar she heard her fellow Deans talking about *c.a.v.e. people*. At first she didn’t understand, but then she learned that *c.a.v.e.* stood for “continually against virtually everything.” She had some of those for sure! As a relatively new member of the faculty, she had never realized how stubborn and closed minded some of her colleagues, like Z., O. and W. could be. At Podunk, the *c.a.v.e. people* consisted of those who either, did not believe in the threat, or were within a few years of retirement, and frankly, didn’t “give a damn.” V. quickly realized that there was not much she could do with them. She sat there and thought, “Okay, how do I get the *c.a.v.e. people* to just not get in the way?” This would be her greatest challenge.

And in the upstairs hallway...

“This place is going to hell,” snarled R.. “I don’t know whose ideas these are about accreditation, what the hell do I care if some

egg-head academics like my ideas or not! Look at my evaluations and what my students say about me on *Rate Your Professors*, I bet I have the highest evaluations of anyone here!"

R. then stormed down the hall and back into his office.

"Think R. is going to make trouble?" J. inquired of B..

"I don't know, maybe he will just retire, he must be old enough, but he sure isn't happy. I feel sorry, in a way, for Dean V. Who knows what he will do? When Dean S. was here R. had a lot of power, but I am not sure who cares what he thinks anymore. Maybe he just needs to come to grips with the new situation," offered B. in response.

"You know, I am not happy with the changes either, but what are you going to do? I have to work at least another 15 years. I can't get out like R. can do," stated J. in a disappointed tone.

"Hey, I am only 53, I am in the same situation that you are," agreed B. "They hired me to teach, they said the MBA was good enough. I've been here 20 years, and suddenly I am *under-qualified* for what I have been doing. That's just dumb, but, what are you going to do?"

"I guess I am just going to have to do some research," J. sighed.

About a year later...

A group of faculty is standing by the mailboxes sorting through this day's crop of memos, internal newsletters, and junk mail from textbooks publishers. They are passing the time with small talk and gossip, when,

"Oh," exclaimed J. as if he was in pain, "I can't believe this!"

"What's wrong?" Q. inquired with a sincere concern.

"Look at this, it's a letter from the editor at the journal where I sent my manuscript. Rejected! And look, six single spaced pages of comments from the reviewers telling me what was wrong with it," J. seemed if he was near tears.

"Look, that happens to all of us," Q. offered trying to offer some comfort to J.. "You get used to it, after a while."

"Well, I don't get paid enough around here if part of my job is to be made to feel like an idiot," responded J. with both hurt and anger in his voice.

"Well, it's all part of the game," chimed in U.

"If it is, then I don't want to play," answered J. as he quickly went off to his office and shut the door.

"These folk are going to have to develop thicker skins or they'll never survive," U. noted.

"Yeah, but we see ourselves differently than they do. J. sees himself as a popular teacher, he seeks approval from the students. He is not used to feedback from peers, and particularly negative feedback. He doesn't see himself as someone who can do battle with the reviewer and argue for his position. Remember, he's the one who said "I don't want to be an intellectual," he doesn't see himself as one, and he doesn't know how to behave like one. It is going to be really tough for him and all these other people to see themselves differently. If they are going to send stuff to the reviewers, they aren't going to be the smartest people in the room anymore. The students aren't that demanding." Q.'s analysis went right to the heart of the matter.

Last week...

P. sat in his office, the academic year was finally over. He had finished his grading and submitted the results. P. was looking forward to the summer. He had some writing projects to finish and get off for review. He had agreed to review for a journal he had never reviewed for before, the manuscript they sent him looked really interesting. Doing a good review would

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challenge him, something his undergraduate students never did. An in July it was off to Europe for 2 weeks; a mixture of holiday and work, if one could call it "work". He always enjoyed the conference that he and G. were going to. The discussions were always stimulating. He knew that he would get really good feedback on his paper, there were going to be a lot of really smart people at this conference! He knew that he would be tested and that he would have to be at the top of his game, but that was just what was so much fun.

He sat and wondered about the future at Podunk. Was AACSB a pipe-dream? He thought about his colleagues.

When R. wasn't sitting in his office sulking, he was in the hallways telling anyone and everyone everything that was wrong with Podunk. It seemed like there was never a day when he wasn't in a foul mood. Occasionally R. would try to stir up some trouble by riling other people to action, but that never seemed to come to anything. In the past, people would have assumed that what was coming from R.'s mouth was really a message from Dean S., but Dean S. was now long gone, and any power that R. derived from that connection had also faded. P. wondered if the real and painful issue for R. was irrelevance, and he had come to know that himself.

And then there was J.. J. had mentioned the other day that he was working on revising his manuscript so that he could try again with the editors. But P. wondered about this. When did J. have the time? He was so busy teaching – his regular classes and an overload. And then there were all of the committees he was serving on, and the student activities that he mentored. To top it off, when P. looked over the summer course schedule, he saw that J. was teaching two courses. J. seemed happy, though. He was in his element.

As P. sat there thinking, L. appeared in the doorway.

"Hey, I got some good news," L. smiled as he began his report. "I got a paper accepted at a conference that's in September."

"That's great!" P. replied.

"Yeah, I figure if we are doing this AACSB thing, I better get back into some of my old habits. It's been a long time for me, the conference is a first step to getting it published. But it's kind of like riding a bicycle, you never really forget how to do it, you just wobble around a bit in the beginning," L. smiled again, "have a good summer."

"You, too," P. smiled and nodded as L. disappeared down the hall.

P., too, was happy and feeling good about himself. He had become an academic because liked to debate ideas. Maybe now there would be rewards for behaving like a professor.

U. and Q. appeared in the doorway.

"Wrapping up?" Q. enquired.

"Just cleaning up my desk a bit, don't want to have to do it when I get back in September," P. answered.

"Yeah, I did the same thing," U. offered. "I am glad it's over. It's been a long year."

"But things are definitely changing for the better," P. said with a smile.

"Well, let's see, there are still a lot of people who are not convinced," Q. was now very serious. "They may still find ways to stonewall this."

"Do you think?" asked P.

"We are a small minority who like the idea," Q. answered. "Most of the folks don't see themselves in the AACSB mold. They see themselves as teachers. But AACSB wants us to act like the rest of the faculty in the university. We may be comfortable with that, but most of

them aren't. Excuse the metaphor, but the war is not won yet."

"The realist in me has to admit that you are right," P. replied in a serious and almost disappointed tone. "Well, at least we have the summer now to do the things we like to do."

"Sure do," U. asserted with a smile. "Three months to think big thoughts and put pen to paper."

"Definitely," smiled P.. "Have a good summer."

"You too," repeated both U. and Q. as they headed down the hallway.

P. sat and thought, "I wonder who will win this in the end?"

### **ACCREDITATION, ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND IDENTITY**

One cannot understand this tale without understanding the mission and goals of AACSB accreditation. Prompted by the critique that collegiate business schools were offering curriculum that was a-theoretical, that business school faculty often had questionable credentials, and that, by and large, collegiate business schools were not of equal status with other professional programs and other academic disciplines (Gordon and Howell, 1959; Pierson, 1959), AACSB through its accreditation process has embarked on a 50 year crusade to make business schools look and act like other departments and programs in the university. With the revision of the accreditation standards in 1994 to include the idea that the standards that a school will need to meet will be "mission driven," AACSB radically expanded its domain to encompass schools that were teaching oriented. This domain expansion, along with AACSB's aggressive marketing of its "brand" has created both opportunities and challenges to schools that had previously not been accredited. The challenges posed are most acute at third and fourth tier institutions such as Podunk, who

have traditionally been resource deprived, have heavy teaching loads, and that minimized the role of scholarship in the responsibilities of the faculty. The need for organizational change required at these institutions in order to meet the accreditation standards is significant. Unfortunately, most deans and other leaders in this kind of change miss an important point. The typical strategy is to treat the needed change as bureaucratic and behavioral – fix the curriculum and get faculty to publish. The peril of this is to miss the important role that identity plays in organizations and to miss the reality that faculty not only need to change their behaviors, but also their identities.

As Linde (1993) notes, individuals create stories and narratives about themselves to both make sense of and to adapt to their life situation (see also, Knights and Willmott, 1999). In an institution like Podunk the faculty co-construct intertwined narratives and texts about themselves (identity) and the organization to give coherence and meaning to their experience. These narratives are intertextual (Hansen, 2006), and function in group sense-making. This co-construction of narratives of identity and organization has important functions of organizational control through the production of "appropriate individuals" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2004).

The dominant intertextual narratives at Podunk center around the organization's "teaching mission" and the faculty's role and identity as "teachers." While some of the faculty may see themselves as and act like "cosmopolitans" (Gouldner, 1957) those individuals are treated with suspicion, subject to ridicule, and their scholarship is devalued. The dominant discourse lionizes behavior that sees the individual as someone who delivers knowledge that has been created by others, but who does not make claims to making knowledge. Such a narrative favors the behavior of "locals" (Gouldner, 1957) and protects individuals from the existential risks that come with having to expose their thinking to external peer review. In the identity of teacher, existential risks are low, as the individual repeats tried and true performances in the

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classroom in front of relatively naïve reviewers. However, the consequence of the dominant discourses is that they lead the organization to insularity.

At Podunk, and at all the other Podunks who are now seeking AACSB accreditation, deans and other change leaders must recognize that faculty resistance to the new job demands of becoming *professors* who produce scholarship is more than simply the unwillingness to change well practiced behaviors of *teachers*. It is a resistance to assuming a new identity that requires not only that the individual see themselves as a research producer, but also, and more problematically, requires the individual to see themselves as someone who takes existential risks.

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