

**Qualitative Inquiry and the War on Terror, Or:
How I Learned to Give up My Liberal Biases and Accept Personal Responsibility
For the Consequences of Official U.S. Government Messages Policies and Narratives**

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Rewind

My father once gave me insight into the paradox of higher education. He said, “You should get the best education you can because it is the one thing our government can’t take away from you.” Then he paused and added a coda: “But *what you know* is something you can’t get away from, either.”

My father was not being ironic. He loved his country and believed in the power of education. But he also knew firsthand the clandestine world, wherein the whole point of gaining access to secret information carried with it—in addition to considerable risk—personal duties and professional responsibilities. My father was a war-seasoned patriot who became someone we today call a “Cold Warrior.” For him, knowledge was never neutral because it had political uses, and how it was used politically—how it was communicated, interpreted, and acted upon—would in fact help determine the fate of the world.

My father was an intelligence officer, or, if you prefer, a spy. He joined what was then an obscure government agency in 1947 and retired from it, officially, in 1969. He had his reasons. His childhood had been defined by his family’s economic struggles during the Great Depression and his adolescence and young adulthood had been

determined by the great ideological struggles that became the Second World War. His generation of intelligence officers was often comprised of women and men who shared a very similar past, and who thought there was no higher calling—nor steadier work—than a lifetime devoted to government service.

Their enemy—my father’s enemy—was Communism. Under State Department cover as a Vice Consul in Rome and London during the 1950s, my father ran agents and fought the Red menace on both sides of the Iron Curtain. He and his boss in Rome, William Colby, were chiefly responsible for turning the tide of the Italian elections away from the Communists in 1956. In London his counterintelligence work acquired a certain duality of purpose, one part devoted to spreading disinformation and propaganda, the other part devoted to uncovering the political truth about a singular man.

It began in the Suez. My father was “our man in the Suez” during the first Middle East crises in 1956, ostensibly there to coordinate the evacuation of American citizens and dependents. There he met, was interviewed, and got seriously drunk and swapped lies with one Harold Adrian Russell “Kim” Philby, ostensibly there to cover the crisis as an independent reporter but in reality the man who would become known as the longest serving and certainly the most notorious and damaging Soviet deep penetration spy in the history of British intelligence. Today, discovering a Philby in our own CIA would be akin to discovering that George Tennant had been a paid operative of al-Qaeda.

My father had instincts about certain people. And he trusted those instincts. His instinct in the Suez in 1956 told him Philby—although already exonerated by the British Secret Service and even by the CIA’s own James Jesus Angleton—was “dirty.” He

didn't yet know how dirty, or for how long, or with what devastating impact. It was just something he felt about the man. It was an instinct.

My father reported this contact with Philby to Angleton back in Washington. Angleton—a poet/genius/paranoid who headed the CIA's Counterintelligence Division and named more than a few of his prize hybrid orchids after men whose careers he had ruined—was a man who hated to admit he made mistakes just a little bit less, or maybe a little bit more, than he hated Communism. He instructed my father to cease and desist in “this Philby nonsense.”

My father didn't follow those orders. He was considered a “fair-haired boy” and thought he had enough Agency cache built up from his successes thus far to do internal political battle with Angleton,. He was still a young man, brash, headstrong, and sure of himself, and he was convinced that what he felt about Philby was worth the personal risk.

As it turned out, he was right about Philby but dead wrong about Angleton. My father's pursuit of Philby became a lesson in the abuses of power as his dossier on the man grew larger and more damning and Angleton's resistance to the allegations grew more determined. My father thought Angleton's friendship with Philby had gotten in the way of his judgment. I have no idea what Angleton thought. He buried my father's reports and later destroyed them.

Nor can I say with any assurance exactly what happened next. The CIA has a strict policy of not releasing operational details about its employees and what I have been able to piece together from other sources—interviews with other spies of his generation, archival data, novels, histories, and memoirs—wouldn't stand much of a truth test in a court of law. But *something* happened. It happened in East Berlin. And it was in June of

1960. My father may or may not have been set up by Angleton to take a fall, but either way, and for whatever reason or treachery, he was caught doing something, implicated in a murder, and declared *persona non grata*. In this way, every spy story is the same story. In the end, intelligence officers are betrayed by either their friends, their country, or the truth.

We returned to Washington. My father had a meeting with Angleton—it didn't go well—and a few days later we found ourselves living in what my father called our "forced exile" in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Cheyenne was a long way from London, Washington, or Rome. My father's posting there may or may not have been entirely gratuitous. Cheyenne is the capitol of the state as well as home to the Francis E. Warren Air Force base. During the years corresponding to my father's work there, the base served as the command center for the largest number of underground ICBMs in our nation's nuclear arsenal. In the event of war, Cheyenne was a likely first tier target. Angleton's message couldn't have been clearer.

My father was already dead to him.

When Philby officially announced his defection to the Soviet Union in July of 1963 my father felt vindicated. He had spent three years in a godforsaken prairie exile and was more than ready to come in from the cold. But he learned the bitter lesson of the paradox of his own "higher education" in the history of espionage: the truth of what he knew, of what he discovered about Philby, about Angleton, about the Agency, and about America, wouldn't save him nor resurrect his career. Instead, what he knew, what he had learned, would haunt him. In the end, it cost him everything—his ambitions, his health, my mother's health, his connection to me and his respect for our government.

His demise produced only one new thing in Washington: a hybrid orchid. It was lilly white and tinged with a peachy pinkness that became stark red at its core. Angleton always enjoyed a good metaphor.

My father died in 1976 a broken man. He died mysteriously, an old man at the age of 53, either ironically or not during the Church Committee hearings on the illegal activities of the CIA, the hearing where his former boss and then CIA Director William Colby first revealed to the public “the family jewels.” My father told my mother that he planned to testify. He knew a lot about those illegal activities, given his firsthand experience conducting them. He also probably had a lot to say about Angleton. But he didn’t live long enough to do that. He went to his early grave in a family cemetery in Maryland on a cold gray day in March, buried with what he knew, haunted by it, but still caring in his soul his country’s deepest secrets.

Thus the paradox he spoke of with me. My father had learned through his own experiences that our government couldn’t strip him of what he knew, or of the truth of it, but neither could he forget what he knew. Or get away from it.

Sometimes, as philosophers say, knowledge is power.

Sometimes it is a personal moral burden.

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It was our shared burden of secrecy about my father’s clandestine identity that commanded and eventually corrupted my family’s life. It was a secrecy nourished by Cold War fears and secured by a protected network of official and unofficial lies.

I grew up blessed and damned by this Cold War cultural surround. Blessed, because moving from place to place as a child and living under the imposed rules of

absolute secrecy, systematic surveillance on our lives by our own government, in constant fear of nuclear death, I acquired a survivor's set of core values early on. Survivor skills are wholly ethnographic: I learned to observe cultural and social contexts and adapt myself and my narrative identities to them. I learned how to gain access to secret information, to fit in with the natives, to make sense of new places and people, to befriend them, cultivate relationships, and interpret their inner meanings. I also learned how to protect myself. You could say that growing up in the Cold War as the son of a spy, I learned to be an adept intercultural communicator.

For all the good this practical education in qualitative methods and fieldwork provided me, it, too, came with an unforgettable life price, or what I call these days "a moral" to my own autoethnographic story. It is a moral that I lately choose to interpret as a moral imperative. And it is a moral imperative that connects my story, and my father's story, to the ongoing narrative of my country. Elsewhere I have termed this connection my "narrative inheritance" (Goodall, in press). The short version of it is that the lessons of my family's own cultural education during the Cold War have become, in the context of our post-9/11 world, a source of knowledge not easily forgotten.

But I am getting ahead of my story.

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By the time I graduated from high school, I wanted nothing more than to get away from home. I wanted no more of my father's conservative Republicanism and secrecy or my mother's diplomatically-induced fear, a nervousness that had by that time matured into a barely functional madness. I wanted to escape from the nuclear age culture of fear and emotional labor that enveloped my childhood and early adolescence.

It was the Spring of 1970 and I, like millions of other children of the Cold War American culture, rebelled. For the next few years I, like so many others, engaged in all sorts of counterculture behavior, marched on Washington to protest the Vietnam War, marched for civil rights and women's rights, said outrageous things, wrote poetry, stayed in school, grew long hair and registered to vote as a Democrat. I have been a Democrat—a proud liberal Democrat—ever since.

I acquired a formal higher education in the Communication discipline. I studied rhetoric and communication theories, organizational and cultural studies, and eventually, after my first job and tenure, I became a self-made narrative ethnographer. I have been a narrative ethnographer ever since (Goodall, 2004).

Here is where my story probably intersects with yours. Like you, I know things about communication, about relationships and community building, about systematic observation and interviewing, about dealing with the inherent ambiguity of information and about the social construction of meanings, and about the organization and management of successful transdisciplinary qualitative research projects, that most people don't know. For 'lo these many years working hard and playing hard by the rules of academe—well away in every way from politics inside the Beltway—I have honed that knowledge and skill set without ever once thinking that what I knew how to do would be—or even should be—valuable to my country in a time of War.

Play

But my father's paradox is still alive within me and I know I can't get away from what I know. Since 9/11 here in America all the old Cold War fears of my childhood

have been by this Republican administration strategically reapplied. As a result, my long-dormant core survivor values and ethnographer's qualitative tools have been similarly reawakened to a new task at hand. One I was born to.

In our post 9/11 culture, like Yogi Berra put it, "it's *deja vu*, all over again."

I *know* I've been here, lived within this cultural storyline, before. If you are like me and grew up during the Cold War, and particularly if you grew up as a classified child in a military or intelligence or government family, my guess is you have to. Once again, America has a powerful, evil enemy—not ideologically-inspired militarist Communism but fundamentalism-inspired non-state terrorism—and once again Americans have been instructed to distrust our neighbors, our coworkers, and our friends. Christian Patriots (such as Timothy McVeigh), Islamic radicals (such as Osama bin Laden), former dictators' offspring (such as the sons of Saddam Hussein), Aryan supremacists, and splinter-faction terrorism sleeper cells said to be everywhere. There are *hundreds* of groups, and *thousands*, perhaps *tens* of thousands, or even *hundreds* of thousands, of people that make up what experts call "the new global social movement" of terrorists allied against American values, beliefs, and interests. Their weapons of mass destruction ran the gamut from suicide bombers to trucks filled with fertilizer to poison gases such as Sarin and chemicals such as anthrax to biological agents such as a pneumonic plague to dirty bombs to render a city useless for a generation to nuclear bombs that end life as we know it on the planet Earth.

We are supposed to be afraid. Very afraid. That is the principal goal of terror as well as the principal message of those in government fighting terror. As we learned in the Cold War, widespread fear creates the cultural, social, and political exigencies for

action against those we suspect of promoting, supporting, or harboring terrorists worldwide. It also encourages the use of heavy diplomacy, military action, police action, espionage, counter-espionage, economic sanctions, and whatever else may be needed or implicated by our hunger for national security, or, in this current iteration, Homeland Security.

So in the interests of Homeland Security, our Constitutional freedoms and supposedly guaranteed rights have been limited by our own Attorney General, the very person charged with the authority to protect and defend them. Instead of old fashioned Cold War civil defense drills we have color-coded daily terror alerts. We accept increased surveillance and security checks. At airports we routinely remove our shoes, belts, pocket change, cell phones, and computers for security scanning and submit our bodies to the new technological innovation of being “wanded.” We are, here, there and everywhere, strongly cautioned against joking about bombs or making allegations against our government or its leaders.

It's déjà vu all over again.

Once again we find ourselves enmeshed in what has turned out to be an ill-conceived and deeply divisive war abroad. We entered it, once again, claiming as a nation to be all about bringing freedom and democracy to a repressed region, but clearly over there, once again, without a plan for how to win or even to achieve a peace. Our generals and politicians are still fighting nations on account of dictators in the middle of a global War supposedly about the elimination of non-state sponsored terrorism, and if this government logic makes little sense it no longer matters because—unlike reporters during

the Cold War—our contemporary media have largely abandoned investigative reporting in favor of protecting their commercial and career interests.

And once again, officials entrusted with protecting our good image abroad and our security at home seem to lack the essential knowledge and skill set to accomplish those urgent and necessary purposes. For example, Karen Hughes, a former Texas reporter who became President Bush's primary public relations campaign manager and who has no experience whatsoever in diplomacy was, in March of 2005, named Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy, with Ambassadorial rank. Her job is to run the campaign to rebuild our image, reputation, and credibility in the world.

In a world ripe for dialogue we seem to know only spin.

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Yes, indeed, I've been here before. So have most of you.

But this time we are adults armed with cultural authority, a sense of history, and some highly developed knowledge and skill sets. As my father's example teaches me, I have inherited knowledge that has in turn created within me a moral imperative for action. This global War on Terror is not something I can ignore.

Nor should you.

Our democratically-elected government, even when we disagree with its policies and disbelieve its spokespersons, is nevertheless a reality we cannot ignore as well as a mediated reflection of ourselves. Whereas even as little as two years ago it was possible to travel abroad and hear distinctions made between the American government and the American people, that distinction is rapidly closing. *We are now as individuals—as we*

have long as a nation been—globally complicit in the causes and cultural conditions that led to this War on Terror.

This is *our* war, whether we like it or not, or approve of it, or not.

It is—rightly or wrongly—a product of our American way of life, our cultural and religious ignorance, and our affluent national ego. These conditions have inspired hatred against America, which is to say, against all of us. It is a war that has conscripted all of us without our consent because all of us—regardless of where we live or what we value or how we believe—are now potential terrorist targets and will continue to be terrorist targets for the foreseeable future. No one gets out of being implicated. For those of us who share a liberal democratic ideology and who oppose the War in Iraq, we represent to our enemies not sympathetic souls but quite the opposite: We are the apostate intellectuals. We are all marked for death.

Hothouse orchids carry our collective names.

Furthermore, this is a costly enduring war in a global economy that is—and will continue—to drain our national economy, threaten our national welfare, and deprive our own children and their children of the better life that we, as a nation, used to promise them. They will inherit not only our debts and our histories, but also our pervasive culture—and the cultural politics—of terror and fear.

These are the reasons why we have no choice but to engage the War on Terror (Goodall, in press). By “engage it” I do not mean reduce to nil the chances of another terrorist attack, because even our most optimistic government officials agree that will never happen. Instead, I mean find better ways to fight it, both at home and abroad, with

the goal of reducing the likelihood that we will continue to spawn new generations of terrorists.

In the final section of this paper, I will detail my personal efforts to apply what I know, and what I have learned, to the War on Terror.

During the fall semester of 2004 Steve Corman and I began a conversation about what Communication theories and research could contribute to the global War on Terror at the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University. Steve is an organizational communication scholar whose specialty is networks. After 9/11 his research had drawn the attention of some “interesting people” in Washington and, I discovered, he currently is part of a scientific team aiding the Joint Special Operations Command.

Given my research into Cold War culture and intelligence organizations crafted out of a decidedly qualitative framework and his firsthand knowledge of networks and communication technology crafted from a more quantitative perspective, we thought it would be interesting to offer a graduate seminar on Communication, Terrorism, and National Security. The seminar was also attractive because we could learn from it. We could offer a public lecture series along with the course, inviting to campus a wide variety of individuals with differing points of view—scholarly, military, diplomatic, education, and media, as well as specialists who have “first responder” duties (please see our website:). Our aim was—and is—is to build a transdisciplinary network of global expertise that can be useful in reducing the negative short- and long-term effects of our global War on Terror.

We want to bring to this war what we know about Communication. We believe, along with the 9/11 Commission, failures in communication brought about the problem and that improvements in communication can go a long way toward lessening them.

We began our conversation with some healthy doubts about that. For one thing, although Communication professors in the academic world believe all that is important in life is either constructed or interpreted as meaningful out of communication practices, we weren't sure those who fighting the war with other weapons and strategies would think so. Or at least perhaps not think so in some of the same ways. Furthermore, as Steve's experiences had shown, trying to translate complex academic theories into clear, practical advisories for people who then risk their lives based on our findings is a very sobering dose of reality. Finally, although it is easy to be smug in lectures about intercultural understandings in a college classroom, how would what we claimed to be true *ring* true with those whose careers have been devoted to diplomacy and fieldwork with disparate others in faraway places?

Our concerns were also tempered with some recent history lessons. During the Cold War, academics, principally from the Ivy Leagues, were routinely recruited into government service with some fairly disastrous policy making results. Social science theories and research methods—still often in their evolutionary infancy—may have been the products of the “best and the brightest” but using them as a foundation for public policy was repeatedly demonstrated to be problematic. We certainly didn't—and don't—want to repeat that particular history lesson.

Beyond these sources of professional anxiety were additional concerns derived from colleagues who thought what we were doing was potentially “dangerous”;

administrators who wanted to see a longer term financial payoff for the institutional investment in the public lecture series; and even the fear expressed to us by a member of the local news media of the likelihood of our series itself attracting potential terrorists, crazies, and protesters. Our course was considered by us to be an experiment, a venture into the unknown future of collaboration across unknown borders and for that reason potentially risky, particularly if not in the end productive, but nevertheless, we pressed on.

* * *

We assembled our team.

From ASU we tracked professors and graduate students who were publishing work on our topic. Our Deans gave us leads. From known contacts outside of ASU we used the Internet, news stories, and books to develop a list of potential speakers. Steve and I were joined by a talented doctoral student, John Parsons, who contributed his own leads to the endeavor. What we ended up with was a list of contributors spanning a wide range of topics and political perspectives.

We asked each of our speakers to address “Communication, Terrorism, and National Security” as the organizing locus of their public lecture, and to agree to be interviewed, in-depth and on camera, by Hugh Downs afterward. Additionally, we reserved time—usually about an hour—for graduate students enrolled in the course to have face time with each of them.

The results have been interesting, affirming, and surprising.

The results have been interesting because those of us participating in the seminar and public lectures have acquired a far deeper understanding of the history and conduct

of terrorism worldwide. Within that general statement is a discourse far more complex than I can elucidate in this paper, but one that we think should be available to Americans everywhere. Until we understand this history we will never fully appreciate the threat.

It has been affirming as well. We have learned that contrary to our initial anxieties, everyone we have talked to agrees that communication is essential to combating terrorism, improving national security, and securing a better, more credible posture for the United States in the world.

Furthermore, our military and diplomatic leaders are far better informed, well read, and engaged with the scholarship on communication than we had originally suspected. For example, the Department of Defense, in September of 2004, conducted its own seminar on “Strategic Communication” (recently declassified) that reveals a depth of intellectual and pragmatic understanding that would surprise most academics in our field. Unfortunately, there also exists within that Beltway trap a variety of consultants, public relations firms, and self-professed communication experts adding some very bad ideas and outdated theories into the mix. Clearly, winning the war of ideas begins at home.

And our experience leading the course has been surprising. Our journey into the nexus of communication and terrorism has taught us many valuable lessons, but chief among them is that terrorism itself is a form of communication. It is a message intended for an audience and wherever it occurs and however it is delivered, how that message is interpreted as meaningful is the point of the exercise. Death, destruction, and disruption are part of the message structure, but they must be understood in relation to the overall message campaign and not as stand-alone icons of grief or suffering.

Second, we have learned that those outside of academe are very much aware of their need to incorporate communication research and qualitative methods into their methods of combating terrorism. It was obvious that these specialists would be interested in technological advances in communication (such as network analysis software or content analysis programs), but what has been most surprising is their enthusiasm for learning more about ethnographic inquiry and narrative theories. Ethnography represents “boots on the ground” intelligence about disparate cultures, and finding ourselves in global war means that how ethnographers learn to penetrate, access, and make sense of others is highly valuable knowledge. Narrative theories are useful in understanding and shaping what our “message” is—or should be—at home and abroad. Clearly the story we offer to others will go a long way toward influencing their expectations, attitudes, and willingness to work with us to identify terrorists and build a more secure future together.

To do that we need to improve how we understand disparate others as well as how we communicate with them. We need to craft a better storyline, a truer and more credible one, in our campaign for public diplomacy at home and abroad. We need to advance knowledge and practice of intercultural communication from the current “transmission model” to a more contemporary one derived from what we know about dialogue and dialectics (Goodall, in progress).

Finally, we have learned that not only what we know is valuable and potentially useful to building a safer world for ourselves and for our children, but that none of us really has the luxury of time. We must begin now to combine the tools of academic critique with practical political action. And our political action should redirect our efforts away from resistance to full-partner participation in the communication and intercultural

work that must be done if we are to be successful in reestablishing the image of America as a good thing, a positive force, in the world.

Pause

My father hated Communism. When I left for college he asked me to promise that I wouldn't become one. It was the only thing he asked of me.

I had no difficulty making that promise. Hating an ideology was not part of my world. I had no intention of becoming associated politically with any "ist" or "ism." I have largely kept that promise.

But today I do understand what it means to hate an ideology, an "ism." My enemy is fundamentalism. I hate fundamentalism of any variety because in every variety of it fundamentalism is the enemy of communication. Fundamentalism—whether it be Islamic or Baptist—is a faith-based virus that denies a living place for everything in life I value: grammar, logic, rhetoric, science, dialogue, discourse, difference, and discovery. I think of fundamentalism as a virus because it spreads so easily through non-inoculated, often undereducated, populations. It is a message-born illness whose fever-pitched yap spawns fanaticism, intolerance, and hate, and whose violent, authoritative appeal is attributed to the will of God.

I hate fundamentalism. I hate it because of what it denies and because of what it inspires. I have learned that terrorism is the name we call its offspring.

Record

One of the unexpected byproducts of our seminar and public lecture series has been a personal realization that I, too, have been complicit in this war. Because I accept the truth of that sentence, I now share a moral and ethical responsibility for doing everything I can to prevent its spread. For me, that means sharing what I know with people who need to know it.

Here is why I am complicit:

Like most North Americans living in relative affluence in our comfortable cities and suburbs, I hadn't paid much attention to the pronouncements of Osama bin Laden, or to the actions of al Qaeda, or to their first attempt to bring down the World Trade Center towers in 1993. I, like most of you and like almost everyone I've met in government, hadn't properly understood the cultural and narrative context for interpreting the messages of radical Islamic leaders during the 1990s.

Nor had I paid much attention to the attacks on our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The bombing of the U.S.S. Cole was merely another terrorist event in a land far away, in a region increasingly marked by news reports of violence. In fact, I am somewhat ashamed to admit it, but when talking heads on various news shows turned their collective attention to troubles in the Middle East, I usually switched channels.

I had better, more important, things to do.

Didn't I have article to write for *Qualitative Inquiry*, or another ethnographic book to explore? I had students to teach, too many meetings to attend, a career to think about, and a wife and child and many friends with whom to enjoy this particular American life. I was *busy*. I voted. I worked for candidates. I thought I had kept up with

world events. I listened every day to NPR. Terrorism, horrible as it was, happened elsewhere. It didn't concern me. Not *directly*. It wasn't my fault so it was someone else's problem.

But I hadn't connected the dots. I hadn't connected the dots all the way down to me. My guess is neither did *you*.

I nowadays tell that story. I've written an account of what I experienced and thought about when four commercial jets changed the course of my story, our narrative about American history, and undoubtedly the world's foreseeable future (Goodall, 2002). I'll give only the short version of how it begins here. I'll tell it again because it is my anti-orchid. It is the autoethnographic beginning of how and why and where I learned to use my writing to reveal a different truth.

September 11, 2001 was another busy day and I thought I was just completing another task on my list of daily tasks when, at 8:46:40 American 11 ripped into the North Tower. I was in a small shop run by two nameless Middle Eastern gentlemen getting my new eyeglasses adjusted.

Without my glasses, I am nearly blind. So I didn't actually see the visuals that accompanied the initial news report. I remember that one of the men in the shop was making the adjustment to my frames when the other man, who had been in the rear of the store where a small television was located, reported to both of us what was happening. At first it seemed an anomaly, a little weirdness in the morning of an otherwise ordinary day. The first news report indicated it was a small plane that had flown into the Tower. How strange! We stood together, three strangers, and, when the man handed back my newly adjusted lens, we watched the news reports revise that story.

It may have been a commercial jet.

We were still standing there when United 175 crashed into the South Tower at 9:03:11. Suddenly these events were not anomalies. None of us knew exactly what we were witnessing. We had no context to interpret it, no way of applying prior knowledge to it, no logical mechanism to kick in and make sense of what our eyes and ears were processing.

None of us had been connecting the dots.

But we knew this: One event can be an accident, but two like events occurring within minutes of each other in the same relative space creates *a pattern*. Gregory Bateson says all communication is pattern recognition. But knowing there is a pattern, and that the pattern is *communicating* something—in this case that it was a terrorist message—isn't the same thing as knowing what the pattern, or the message, means.

I didn't know what it meant. Neither did the men in the shop.

Nor, apparently, did almost anyone else, at almost every level, of our government. Reading *The 9/11 Commission Report* (2004), it is clear that my personal failing to adequately interpret the meaning of these terrorist messages—to even recognize they were messages—was replicated throughout every intelligence agency and political body throughout the land.

We had a failure of message, of message recognition, and of message interpretation. What we had on September 11 was clear evidence of our failures to communicate.

Since that fateful day, and since that particular adjustment to my lenses, I have resolved to learn to see more clearly my personal relationship to history and to accept my

professional responsibility for national narratives crafted to tell particular stories about this ill-named Global War on Terror.

It is, as I said earlier, work I was born to do.

I grew up during the Cold War. I know how to apply communication to cultural problems and narrative mysteries. I have skills as a qualitative researcher. I can be, and I want to be, useful to my country. Like my father before me, this unusual repertoire is knowledge I can neither deny nor get away from.

I have connected the dots all the way down to me.

I know I have ways of combating not only terrorism, but fundamentalism.

It is my moral imperative to act. It has been my Cold War childhood, my father's life, and my seemingly nomadic autoethnographic academic life that has prepared me, that has equipped me, for a new way of thinking about what my future work should be.

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