

Confessions Of A (Somewhat) Reluctant Consultant: Or, What Happens When Academic Dreams Go “Poof”

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This essay really is about a protracted and painful transition from academic and teacher to consultant and researcher, but first, I want to get a few things off my chest. If you can stand some wholly relevant whine at the outset, stay with me, but if not, just skip to the third section. Key Words: Anthropology, Consulting, Academia, and Qualitative Research

Sour Grapes?—I’ve made wine, baby . . .

As I begin this essay I’m sitting at a “desk” in the Faculty Lounge, working on one of the two computers to which adjunct instructors theoretically have access. I share this “office” with who knows how many other adjuncts, some almost half my age and others almost half again my age. I was told earlier in the summer that “no one ever works in there--you’ll find it a productive little office!” Well, yeah, there are staples, pencils, and scratch paper, but there aren’t any pens, notepads or usable reference books. There is no lock on the door, lockers aren’t available, and my request to allow me to use a bicycle lock on the cabinets was ignored, so I use my laptop computer here at my own peril. The monitor of one of the two computers is unreadable¹. The wall clock alternates between being 20 minutes off (potentially dangerous) and 18 hours off (just annoying), but is too high on the wall to be able to take down easily and fix, which I would, but I’d be yelled at if I got caught and probably told to fill out a work order, wasting time, resources, and labor in the process. The photocopy machine doesn’t work at all, and another single-pager does so but just barely, and wasn’t designed for books and journals. It has no automatic feeder, doesn’t collate, and the edges of the plate catch the corners of books and journals as the plate slides back and forth, the more so the more heavily one must press the lid to the plate to keep the books and journals aligned. The Epson Behemoth 767 scanner hasn’t worked in this millennium.

The computer I’m working on is an, ahem, somewhat older version (a Pentium-I running at 75 megahertz--woo-hoo!) of those computers that grace the real desktops of the real professors who have real appointments. There isn’t a tenure-stream here where I’m teaching for one term, but rather, a teaching faculty body that consists of adjuncts, on the one hand, and three-quarter and full-time professors, on the other. “My” computer takes several minutes to boot up at all and often 15 to 20 minutes to get to an e-mail portal—when it doesn’t freeze up altogether. Typically, I set it to task and return in awhile. Because it doesn’t belong to any one “real” professor, the hard drive is formatted to erase automatically at the end of the day any text written upon it, thus requiring one frequently to save to an even

¹ To be fair, this did eventually get replaced.

slower, less roomy, and less dependable floppy drive (and not to forget to overwrite the correct version of the document when one gets home).

The “desk” on which I write really isn’t, being neither deep enough to handle a monitor, a keyboard, and two wrists, nor wide enough to accommodate the articles and books I need with which to write. My wrists hurt every time I use it, one being completely suspended off the edge of the desk, and the other being creased badly for lack of room for a wrist-pad. You tell me if there’s irony here: my wrists hurt because I’ve been writing lengthy e-mail messages to my students in a medical anthropology course on, among other things, repetitive movement stress syndromes. It occurs to me that the mental states of overworked, underpaid adjuncts are understudied phenomena.

One little insult seems inevitably to lead to another. In the “New Faculty” section of my campus’s monthly newsletter, you will not find my name. The article was penned by one of the people on the search committee who, collectively, thought that my overall qualities were *rather more* than required for the permanent, three-quarter-time position for which I had applied in July. That oughtta be my choice, not theirs. *This* time the “wrong answer” was that, yes, in addition to remaining a fantastic teacher (with student teaching evaluations and recommendations to prove it) and taking on significant service commitments, I planned to launch a longer-term research program based here in Portland, to write grants, to publish the results, and to employ and otherwise deploy students. I even wanted to bring a conference here. The underlying message seemed to be “how can you do all that?—that’s going to take you away from administrative duties.” What continues to rankle is that precisely the three things that I was encouraged by my department chair last summer to highlight during my job interview were the ones that were held against me by the other members of the search committee—or so she informed me later.

So now, I’m a lowly Adjunct Professor again. As such, I don’t qualify for travel assistance, so I had to cancel a trip I had planned to Apia, Samoa, where I had been invited to give an important paper at the Pacific History Association meetings. Partly to assuage my hurt feelings at not getting the job, I was promised an office of my own for the year so that I could get some work done, but that fell through, too. In a few minutes I will take off to teach a course in a basement room that is just as overlarge, chilly, and unfriendly as was its predecessor small and resource-short. It did feature a protective mask and first-aid kit, though (which might have come in handy during one of my medical anthropology assignments, in which we deal with the ethnomedical properties of phlegm), but neither was there a videocassette recorder. I can’t list a “work” phone number or e-mail address on my course syllabi, however, since I have neither, so I have to call or write home to retrieve my work-related messages. Nor do I have a private place for meeting with students during office hours (what if one of them starts to cry, wants to share personal feelings about being in school, or needs to vent about another teacher, perhaps even another adjunct sitting nearby?). Because students aren’t allowed into the Faculty Lounge without me there, they can’t come in to pick up their assignments. Unfortunately, the receptionists either can’t find my mailbox (my name was misspelled and box misalphabetized) or can’t be bothered to look, so much of my work in correcting papers and handing them back swiftly (generally, in under two days) has gone for naught. Not once, not twice, not even thrice, but four times this semester one or another receptionist has mangled important information, including distraught communication from students about computer malfunctions, missed appointments, and difficult readings. My name has been misspelled in the catalog, I have yet to be offered

a contract, one commitment after another from the administration has been broken (from course-load to office space to pay scale), and I was invited in writing to celebrate the getting *by someone else* of the job to which I had pinned my future life's dreams. Later in the semester, the task of "observing" me in the classroom fell to her! That day went fabulously successfully, mind you, and I had absolutely nothing against her or the task *per se*, but still ...

Simply put, I don't deserve this. In terms of study habits, dedication, and patience, I was a grad student's grad student at, first, Columbia University, and then the City University of New York, from which I earned my Ph.D. in anthropology. I can remember the very day I decided to become one, and the very choice I faced: it was either attend a 5th Avenue book-fair on a sunny Sunday afternoon in New York in September with two visiting friends (Door #1), head to the library and read the remaining 440 pages of Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* by Monday morning (Door #2), or try to do both, fail at one, and hope that I wasn't called out the next day in class (Door #3). Fortunately, I took what was behind Door #2, and was ready when called upon the next day by my teacher (and was apparently the only one to have finished the book).

In terms of *book-learning*, I couldn't have been much better prepared for anthropological fieldwork. I had taken qualitative inquiry courses as an undergraduate student, and by then had taken two more courses in methodology and proposal-writing as a graduate student, in which I wrote and critiqued others' grant proposals and read all manner of texts on ethics, entry styles, research methods and techniques, and exit strategies. When I went to professional conferences, I attended methods workshops, not just ones on "hot" topics. I read assiduously in the methods literature of professional journals. Of course, I wasn't prepared for the *reality* of ethnographic fieldwork (in my case, on prostitution, STDs, sexual violence, and alcohol consumption--for starters, see Hammar, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 1999), but honestly, who is? I had H. Russell Bernard's methods Bible with me, *Research Methods in Anthropology: qualitative and quantitative approaches* (now in its 3rd edition--2002), which I used nearly everyday in big and small ways,² and which I'm using again in the classroom this term. Plus, I had an entire satchel-full of "take extra marmalade and a big stick for the dogs"-style anecdotes about fieldwork to keep me warm at night. It's true, student practitioners of perhaps the most ethnographic of all the qualitative fields--cultural anthropology--aren't (and perhaps inherently can't be) well trained prior to first significant fieldwork, probably because first fieldwork is, well, so significantly different than book-learning.

"Well, why'dju even take the position if you hate it so much?"

If that's what by now you're muttering to yourself, you'd be right to do so. I certainly didn't plan it this way. I had not applied for a single academic position since the spring of 1999 when I hung up my teaching cleats, but several months ago while on this campus, where I was revamping various versions of my C.V., learning new computer

2. For example, I used his coding scheme to handle the 715 pages of fieldnotes I took during the 19 months I conducted fieldwork. As well, I took his suggestion to keep not just a diary, and not just field-notes, but also a field-log, noting, on the left-hand side of the page, at the start of the day, what I planned to accomplish that day, and on the right-hand side, at the end of the day, what I had accomplished. Try as I might, the disconnect between the two remained, though I eventually came to see that disconnect a bit more productively.

applications, and polishing my cover letter-writing skills, I just decided one day to send a package of academic materials to my current department chair. Within two days we were talking on the phone about which courses I might teach during the coming academic year, “and by the way, there’s a permanent job opening in our department, and I really, really want to encourage you to apply.” An entire summer’s worth of preparation, communication, draft syllabi, dreams, and good omens led me to believe that the job would be mine, that they’d be fools not to hire me. When I left the room, I felt that I had creamed, just absolutely slaughtered the interview, and I had never felt more strongly about my prospects.

Well, they didn’t hire me, but much as I’d like to write about why and how and who and when, I’m not going to. In the days and weeks following, I just kept thinking to myself that there must be something Karmic to this, which I would just have to learn whatever lessons there were for me. I know that all of you adjuncts and in-betweeners and part-timers out there in journal article reader-land know just how I feel. You know what kills me the most, though? I know quite a few deserving colleagues who *easily* got academic positions, but who don’t like what they do for a living. I know other not-so-deserving colleagues who got jobs mostly by playing the Old Boy (and in some cases, Old Girl) network. Others haven’t had an original thought in years, gave up research and publication a long time ago, but continue to milk the system and make stupid hiring decisions that perpetuate the already rotten system. Some make it a habit to sleep with instead of teach their students. I have stood at adjacent urinals alongside not one, but two professors, in the same day, who fifteen years ago slept with my friends when I was a student at the same college, including a girlfriend.

Well, there’s always Public Health . . .

Believe it or not, though, that isn’t really why I have put fingers to keyboard. My story actually begins on May 1, 2001, at precisely 8:23 a.m., P.S.T. It was a Monday morning, and just as it is for all those on the planet for whom “Monday” means something, me and Mondays hadn’t gotten on well with each other during the year I worked for the American Red Cross. Most Monday mornings, I went into work having benefit of about two to three hours’ sleep, and often times, none at all. When my academic dreams went “poof” in the summer of 1999, I went unemployed (though made no monetary claims for such!) for eight months or so. After several months of painful searching I was hired by a temporary agency on behalf of the American Red Cross, which needed a Research Associate on their Hepatitis C Virus Lookback Project. Like most blood banks around the world, the A.R.C. had had (and continue to have—see Neergaard, 2002) a terrible time dealing with the several hepatitis viruses (and the serological markers of such) that course through the blood veins of Americans. Though it was *mostly* unintentional (I happen to specialize in doctor-caused, iatrogenic disease, so I’m not going to be *completely* charitable—see Hammar, 1997), many thousands of Americans became infected through blood transfusions with Hepatitis C because until the late 1980s and early 1990s there was no adequate test for such to use on would-be blood donors. Blood is considered a “food” by the federal Food and Drug Administration. Therefore, in order to stay in business (and it *is* a business, the blood-banking industry), every person who had attempted unsuccessfully during certain years to donate blood (either because they really did have or formerly had Hepatitis C infection or because they had tested falsely “positive” on new but not yet improved, not sufficiently

specific antibody tests) had to be contacted, and if possible, re-tested. Due to an incomparably labyrinthine algorithm by which some people can and others cannot donate blood, those who had even once tested antibody “positive” (no matter how falsely so) were not allowed to do so again. However, some of them welcomed this news and eagerly leapt at the chance to receive free (and better, more specific) testing and counseling about Hepatitis C and the sexual transmissible risks thereof.

In any event, I was hired to become a Research Associate. Except for the five glorious summers in Jackson, Wyoming that I spent as a graduate student working on the greens crew of a magnificent golf course, it had been awhile since I had had any form of employment other than academic. And believe me, this was not an academic job. Jesus, five days a week, 8:30-5:00, and a half-hour for lunch—what the hell was I thinkin’? For several months I experienced an insane, slavish devotion to methods of learning that seemed equal parts counter-productive and counter-intuitive. People don’t “learn” much by flipping through the pages of bound manuals and taking self-administered tests, they don’t remember very well what they have learned, and they certainly aren’t encouraged to think critically about what they’ve learned. I worked and socialized with unhealthy minds and bodies all around me, day in and day out. Gravy and bacon, candy and more candy, bacon and margarine, more gravy, more bacon, more candy, more margarine, and did I mention candy?

At least they coulda served butter, but nooooooooooooo. I naively expected the American Red Cross to be a place where good nutrition and sound body philosophy and humane social relations would rule, but I was sorely mistaken. The level of sugar-consumption was stuck in the “red” zone. The annual cycles of weather, academics, and agriculture I have become accustomed to as an anthropologist were rudely replaced with garishly celebrated holidays (that is, all of ‘em) and increased candy consumption thereat. In addition to having to deal all the time with members of the public who were angry over this or that (from the American Red Cross’s ban on “homosexual blood” to the most recent “Mad Cow” scare), I was confronted with several score “line workers” who had yet to read *Birth of the Clinic, Truth and Method*, or, can you believe this one, *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia*? That’s right, no one, not even my supervisor, had read *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia*, not even the second, expanded edition! I know, I know, it’s monstrous, but there you go.

Nevertheless, I have to say that it was undoubtedly on the strength of my research skills; my background in qualitative research methods; my knowledge base in gender, sexual health and medical anthropology; my normal, finely-tuned ability to synthesize new information quickly; and above all, the fact that I write well and think cogently that I was hired in the first place. As an academic, I possessed a skill-set that was, if not fully valorized, at least useful to a “non-profit” organization. I had already worked microfiche and microfilm readers and printers—more frequently than I care to recount. I have dug in musty, old archives. I frequently consulted Internet-based and other kinds of electronic media and search engines to research commonplace and not-so-common sociomedical topics. As an anthropologist I possessed superb interviewing skills that allowed me to deal with members of the public, not even to say the people who were on the “Wanted List” of our Lookback Project. I was reasonably numerate, supremely well organized, and had a working knowledge of many different sociomedical fields. Moreover, I knew where to look for what I didn’t know, and no, that didn’t mean B.D.R. 1701A–Appendix J2-7. For heck’s sake, for \$12/hour, whom better could they find?

By and by, however, I came to see and experience that the thought-styles and knowledge bases that well fit me for academic pursuits were anathema to the American Red Cross. Right from the outset, and despite an extremely courteous approach on my part, I began to have running skirmishes with an American Red Cross lifer, an “expert” on everything blood banking-related, but who didn’t apparently know anything about *real people in social-behavioral process*, and who was unable to question authority or assimilate new information. Despite the fact that our training materials were littered with palpable falsehoods (for example, the phrase “AIDS test” and the simple, inevitable, one-to-one relationship between HIV antibodies, HIV, and AIDS), she believed fervently in what they said and in the existence and dangerousness of sexual “risk” groups whose members demonstrably aren’t. She and her colleagues were homophobic and xenophobic. My training in academia says that bad evidence will out, that ideas that can’t any longer be supported will eventually give away. Call me a Kuhnian if you must (Kuhn, 1984), but I suppose that I expected them to be interested in new facts and new interpretations of old facts. They had neither knowledge nor interest in the fact that blood-transfusion and -banking has been extremely controversial for three and a half centuries, that blood—the very stuff of our lives—has emerged fully as a commodity separable from us, and that blood-related experimentation has been implicated in World War Two-related war crimes and all sorts of international scandals (for starters, see Kramer 1993; Starr 1998; Titmuss 1997).

Above all, the qualitative researcher in me was appalled at how poorly designed and executed and interpreted were the the one-page “screening” questionnaires on which potential blood donation rests: the Blood Donation Records (BDRs). I was shocked at the extent to which the A.R.C. had clear policies of rewarding those who would obtain from past, current, and would-be donors The Right Answer instead of the Truth. For example, the only acceptable “Yes” answer on the entire form is to the very first question, the one that asks whether the potential donor is feeling in “good health” today. Given the two-column nature of the research instrument (just think what would happen to blood collection were “I can’t possibly know that, however much I might like to” to become a third option!), that “Yes” thus sticks out from all the other putative “No” answers, making it easier for line staff to search for possible other Yesses. The BDR thus not only allows and encourages, but sometimes even forces donors to tell falsehoods, if only to expedite their interview. Because donors already “know” what the Right Answers are (“No”s, to a one), they missed that both questions and policies might have changed since the last time they donated, as in fact they frequently do.

We all know how fallible are self report-style questionnaires (see Schwarz, 1999), but apparently the A.R.C. doesn’t. We know, for example, what unkind effects can ensue when question order changes, when respondents clearly don’t understand the question that is asked of them, or when they understand the literal meaning of words but not their semantic or lexical meaning. Take “Are you in good health today?”—please! I’m stressed out beyond belief today because I’m unemployed and I have to show up in court because my son got in trouble again and my heart is racing—should I mention that? I’m feeling fine today, but this is the first time in three weeks I can say that, and I’ve generally been incredibly run-down—will they take my blood if I say so? What do they mean by “good health? Should I mention that my neighbor, Sheila Patterson (Oops!), lies every time she donates about that trip she took to the U.K.”

Unfortunately, this kind of properly skeptical attitude isn't wanted at the A.R.C. Quite to the contrary, a "No" here or single other "Yes" elsewhere will a) blow three hours for donor and staff alike when you factor out completely all the time, resources, knowledge, and paperwork necessary; b) make the donor look like a doofus; and require c) pesky, uncomfortable follow-up questions the answers to which could entangle past and future donors and recipients, untold labor power, and sometimes several score blood products. "Whaddya mean, you've had hepatitis for 11 years?! Are you insane? That's what hepatitis is, you moron—liver disease. How could you have failed to mention that to us? What about your three donations in 1997, another in 1995, and two in 1993? Do you have any idea how many blood products we're gonna have to try to recall, you knucklehead? Why are you darkening our door again?"

As it may appear by this point that I've strayed rather distantly from my original purpose, my point is that there are risks attendant to attempting straightforwardly to "apply" social science and particularly qualitative perspectives and expertise outside of academic contexts. Let me explain. No one in their right mind in qualitative inquiry (and they do not have to be sex researchers) would accept that anyone *really* knows the Truth about the sexual practices in which current and former partners have engaged since 1978, though yes, all donors are qualified and in a position to give what they know to be The Right Answer. Nor is there such a thing as an "AIDS test," such that a "positive" or "negative" result is still physically impossible. Thus, potential donors can't honestly say that they've ever had one. Even when "HIV" began to substitute for "AIDS," still, most donors have in fact been tested not for direct evidence of HIV (since HIV antigen tests are far too tricky and expensive to use on a mass scale), but for antibodies thereto, so there again proceed many, many thousands of falsehoods told every day in America. To take another example, female-to-female sexual contact (whether between life-long "female homosexuals," in their parlance, between bisexual females, or between a straight woman and a lesbian whom she has paid to have sex with her but who also strips in straight joints and has male sexual clients on the side) was assumed to be pathogenically inconsequential, but male-male sexual contact (without knowing *anything* else) was considered to be inherently so, regardless of whether it referred to adolescent masturbation, prison rape, a one-nighter, or a completely monogamous coupling. Vast legions of people who have sexual contacts with multiple people but in palpably "safer" ways (i.e., by way of greater frequency of successful barrier method usage) are denied the great privilege of donating blood, while far more vast legions of "faithful" girlfriends and wives are allowed to donate, but who never use barrier methods of protection when they have sex with husbands and boyfriends who are not so full-of-faith, who are, or who will become infected with who-knows-what.

Man, did we go round and round on this one!, and I could not get a single colleague even to consider the possibilities. The assumptions they make! The assumptions they fail to question! No one whom I met wanted to change an obviously flawed research instrument despite the public health implications thereof. To a one, they considered a potential "I Don't Know" option to be unnecessarily muddying the waters, though they agreed, to a one, that would be perhaps more truthful. Many donors, if they told the Truth, would have been denied the privilege of donating blood because of their *categorical status*, not because of serological markers of infection in their blood. Some numbers of donors, for example, are in polyamorous relationships, and that fact trumps the demonstrably greater degree of safety in which most of them engage others sexually. The real problems are with those happily

married, “monogamous” heterosexuals who think that Safe Sex was designed for “nuts, sluts, and perverts,” as they were known in sociology awhile back, certainly not for “faithful” wives and girlfriends. Acknowledgment that they really don’t know the totality of their partners’ sexual habits would be painful, yes, but perhaps it would allow for increased blood donations (that the A.R.C. and other blood banks say they want) to come from people who, while sexually “out of the box,” as it were, are nevertheless pathogenically no more dangerous, and perhaps much less so in some ways. The instrument is founded upon lies and produces more of them every day.

Five months into my stint with the A.R.C., as the Hepatitis C Virus Lookback Project was beginning finally to wind down, I was hired for a position for which I had applied a month or so earlier, a full-time position as their Infectious Diseases Investigator, at \$17/hour.

Once again, all of those qualities and characteristics that are welcomed in academic circles would *appear* to benefit the work that an Infectious Diseases Investigator does for the A.R.C. Nevertheless, the bureaucratic behemoth that was the A.R.C. was intransigent when it came to critical thinking, and was just as cold molasses-like when it came to suggested changes in thought or behavior as the most “tradition”-riddled culture in Southeast Asia, just as impervious to new ideas as your garden-variety Stone Age Culture. If thinking is your stock-in-trade, if you make a habit to question authority, much less when issues of life and death are at stake, do not attempt to work for the A.R.C. If you delight in the transmission of new ideas and processes, you will have better luck attempting to tweak the caste system in India.

“Houston, we have a problem”

Anyway, back to my story. Precisely two weeks shy of seven months later, I slumped down in my chair on yet another miserable Monday morning, May 1, 2001. I had slept poorly on the preceding Friday night, worse on Saturday night, and that Sunday night, well, that Sunday night I hadn’t slept a single wink. Come to think of it, I had not slept well on Thursday night, either, and despite a momentary respite of six hours’ worth of sleep on Wednesday night, hadn’t really slept well the entirety of my tenure at the A.R.C. Come to think of it *squared*, I hadn’t slept well since reaching the end of the line in the summer of ‘99. Come to think of it *cubed*, Jesus, I hadn’t slept well since late undergraduate days, for all kinds of reasons that at least some of you readers out there know full well. I didn’t sleep at all the night before my first day on the job at the A.R.C., and I didn’t sleep more than an hour the night before the final day of my tenure. I had only two good nights of sleep, twice, during that entire year, both times following application of a new homeopathic remedy. Back in February of 2001, I went fully seven days and nights without sleeping, and I am still unable to put into words what that was like.

Clearly, my psyche has not been happy for a long, long time, and despite having listened intently to it for clues (or so I thought), I obviously was not hearing the messages I needed to hear. My loving and talented homeopath, the kind and sagely Jungian therapist I saw for a time, my devoted Father and step-mother who grieved for me, my partner, Cassandra Lee, each of whom had taken such good care of me despite there being, really, no evidence that my “situation” was or would ever improve, all supported my growing suspicion that not having gotten what I wanted, in life, in occupation, in my total existence (Marx called it the “species-being” in the *Philosophical and Economic Manuscripts of*

1844), was the cause of a near psychotic break induced by insomnia. I got through it just like I got through grad school, just like I got through painful fieldwork, and just like I've endured every other life-challenging obstacle—I held out because I knew that something better was in store.

“Whaddya mean, you didn't tell Quality Control?”

Back to that fateful morning of May 1. I was already as miserable and disconsolate as you can imagine a person to be, but three things transpired, two bad, one great, that set me back on track. First, I had to answer a memo that I had put off for too long already, inquiring as to when I wanted to be tested on the newest stack of blue-colored training materials, impressively labeled “Deviations” (you don't even wanna know). “Nope,” I said to myself, “I am drawing a line in the sand. You can't make me, you can't make me.” I realized precisely then that change was afoot, that I would give my notice that day. Second, it gradually began to dawn on me that I had made a clerical mistake on Friday, the consequences of which I would shortly begin paying. Several times weekly, policies change at the A.R.C., some of them niggling, some of them momentous. Some of them are handled in incredibly ponderous, time-wasteful ways, as befits any other humongous bureaucracy, but others are dealt with more by way of mouth, gossip, and innuendo. I can't even remember any longer what the precise issue was, but it had something to do with the way in which people (not just me) on “our” side in Donor and Records Management were supposed to communicate a particular factoid to staff on “their” side (Quality Control, in this case). The departmental squabbles and cross-fire that are so common in the A.R.C. are neatly summarized by a Swat Pakhtun proverb that goes roughly like this: “I against my brother. I and my brother against our cousins. I, my brother, and our cousins against them, their brothers, and their cousins.” It produced mistakes and acrimony of unbelievably unhealthy proportions (and thus compromised the integrity of the blood supply). In any event, my psyche snapped to painful attention and cried out to me, “Come on, you know this isn't for you, and you aren't for it. Get back to being an anthropologist and find a way of doing what you want to do. Whether or not you're welcome here, your perspectives sure aren't.”

But third, ah, the third thing that happened to me that morning . . . (Bet you were wondering whether this story was ever going to pick up.) Before I set to work on the morning's usual tasks, and because I still had three minutes to go before my shift officially started, I received and replied to a brief e-mail message from my friend and cultural/medical anthropology colleague at the University of Victoria, who some weeks prior had tapped me to comment helpfully on an initial draft of her research proposal, outlining work she hoped to do on behalf of the U.S.A.I.D. mission in Indonesia. She proposed to investigate for five months the sexual behavioral and other transmissive risks, big and small (global and microbial), of sex workers, third-genders, adolescents, migrating Javanese, and soldiers, in West Papua, across the border from where I work, in Papua New Guinea. Dear Goddess, her proposal had been approved, she'd been granted about U.S. \$70,000 to do this project, and she had enough money in her budget to pay me U.S. \$25/hour for a month's worth of work! “Could I start by May 15th or so?” she asked.

Well, yes, I could, and I did. May 15th, you see, is always my birthday. May 15th 2001 would also be two weeks from this very day, which would be the normative time for “giving one's notice” and all that. So, later that afternoon, I turned to my supervisor, closed

the door, and tearfully and painfully (remember, I was still in the throes of extreme insomnia) informed her that I wasn't happy, that I was quitting, and that I was going to do so on my birthday. These three events had transpired as they did and when they did, I am convinced, for good cosmic reasons.

I quit my job as Infectious Diseases Investigator on May 15th, 2001, and roughly the next day began a so-called "career" as a qualitative methods consultant. Here was my chance actually to be paid for doing what I do best! What a concept! Off and on for two weeks I combed obvious and arcane sources of information for classic and cutting-edge examples of research methods that would enable her to collect the information she needed. Those included what she (following others) has dubbed Rapid Anthropological Assessment Procedures (or R.A.A.P.), which she and her research assistants put to good use almost immediately (Beebe 1995). Following her lead, I helped to design for her a Standardized Interview on Sexuality, a multi-sectioned, part-sociodemographic, part-narrative, part-open ended instrument that she subsequently modified, translated, and used successfully in the field. I put together for her a sexual/travel-related diary method of sorts, relying partly on examples I had encountered in the literature (e.g., Coxon 1988; Pickering *et al.* 1989). I designed for her a two-days-long workshop on research methods that we subsequently co-facilitated there on her campus. We revamped the questionnaire; talked over everything under the sun, and in general helped to prepare her for what turned out to be incredibly useful, politically engaged fieldwork. More to the point, I got paid good money for it!

Then I hit a snag. If this was what I was going to do for a living, how were others to come to know about me? Business cards weren't enough, although I entertained for a time the idea of painting my car (the Ethnomobile) as an advertisement, you know, something tasteful, but, for a car, perhaps too ethnographic. I enrolled in a three-part computer course in Microsoft FrontPage so as to learn how to build and maintain an Internet website that turned into: <http://fp.involved.com/methodsman>. My Victoria colleague eventually returned to me for assistance she needed to edit and re-write the Technical Report that would mark the completion of her project, which once again traded heavily on my years in academia. The latest work I did for her involved receiving, editing, and sending back drafts of chapters of her Technical Report, and I found Microsoft Word wholly appropriate to that task. Once again, it was she, not me, who decided on the figure of \$25/hour, though I would probably have been happy with substantially less.

Casually mentioning one day to a nurse-practitioner the work that I'd been up to recently, she told me that she needed help rewriting and editing a paper she had written for a nursing school course, a paper that she needed to turn into a publication so as to beef up her C.V. and boost her chances for a significant raise. Bam!, she hired me practically on the spot. We worked side by side at her and at my computer, again in Word, and for a solid week I put to good use the same skills as mentioned above, the skills that had made me such a successful grad student and academic. For example, I had to check each and every reference for spelling, volume, number, and pagination, before committing it to print. I had to read skimingly a few articles in the journal in question, *Critical Care Nurse*, so as to suss out the nuances and subtleties of audience and style. I raised questions of logic and substance to sharpen her own, growing sense of herself as a "qualitative" researcher. The end result is a sterling essay, "Caring for Adolescents in the Adult Intensive Care Unit" (Kimberly, 2002). In this case, it was she who suggested to me what I would be paid (\$30/hour) that hourly figure matching precisely what she made as a nurse-practitioner, and

the total figure matching just as precisely what she had accumulated to that point in her professional development fund.

Two weeks later came my first “regular” client, and “whammo!,” I began to find my way outta the forest into a clearing of sorts. I received a brief e-mail message from someone who had seen my website link advertised on the “Links” page of *Qualitative Report* (thank you, Ron Chenail!), requesting assistance on a project that had languished for too many years as he tried to live, work, study, and keep a relationship alive. Did I know about work in building case studies in business/management research (Eisenhardt 1989), and did I know anything about Grounded Theory? Well, “no” to the first, but “yeah, sure” to the second, and gimme two days, and I’ll have Eisenhardt (1989) read and unraveled for you, you bet. Once he returned from New York we had some long talks, talked candidly about his budget, and we settled on a plan whereby I would work for him for about ten hours per week. Once again, this provided me with a great opportunity to put my academic skills to good use, and to begin to learn the rudiments of a qualitative data management software program, Atlas.ti (Version 4.2). I spent many hours in the library for him, combing the stacks and skimingly reading, annotating and photocopying book chapters and journal articles, beginning to reframe his methodology, and eventually editing his work to date. As well, I helped him to edit, turn into text documents, and code and analyze 24 extended interviews he conducted with executives working in Silicon Alley, lower Manhattan. Yes, Alley, not Valley, a time/space continuum that, in marxian terms, was a “social formation” that had dried up just about as fast as it had sprung up outta the ground in the early ‘90s.

I enjoyed this work tremendously, even though, at first blush, the topic wasn’t something of which I knew or cared about much. Given his work commitments, and my growing sense of what I was worth and “what the market would bear,” we decided upon a figure of \$24/hour, and I began a routine whereby I would send out an invoice on Monday morning requesting payment for the previous week’s work plus the week that would end by the time my client received the invoice, usually by Friday.

From that point forward, things began steadily to look up, even if not every discussion I had with a potential client led to a paycheck. Here is the first helpful suggestion I can make: *each of them availed themselves of the “free, one-hour consultations” I advertise on my website.* For example, I have had many rounds of discussion by e-mail with a brain-and-disability researcher up in Canada, one who was casting about for research methods help in framing and conceptualizing a study she wanted to do (had she the time) of what happens to friendship networks of people who have been badly brain-injured. There was a Ph.D. candidate from Norway, who really didn’t know anything about qualitative methods, but whose dissertation supervisor was pushing him in that direction. I had another lengthy round of correspondence with an advertising executive in Greece, who had the task of putting together a large-scale proposal for a study of mobile telephony. Jeez, I worked for her for a long time, but without earning a dime. Still, I got some practice in putting together a business proposal (see Hammar, 2002a), and read a lot of helpful books in the process. Right here in Puddletown (Portland, Oregon) there was a beleaguered psychotherapist who wished to transform her work culture, partly in response to some extremely damaging revelations about such in our local arts/culture rag, the *Willamette Week*. Another Ph.D. candidate on Long Island wanted to hire a qualitative methods specialist out of jealousy more than anything—other members of her cohort were allowed to hire statisticians, so why couldn’t she hire someone to help her write research grant proposals and design a decent

questionnaire? The list goes on, of people with whom I've corresponded at length—and for free—but overall, I have truly enjoyed it. My second point would be thus: *if you haven't hooked 'em in the first 24 hours, you ain't gonna hook 'em*. Without exception, those who haven't hired me within a day of the first phone-call, haven't hired me (or apparently anyone else). Be careful, therefore, about committing yourself too much to someone who hasn't yet shown a willingness to pony up.

Nevertheless, by responding *immediately and in great detail* to postings on the web, I've been able to stay employed as a consultant for coming up on two years now. A Ph.D. candidate from Union Institute and University contacted me (through my web-site) and asked that I become a qualitative research methods consultant for her. Because her university exists in cyber-space, it requires her to hire consultants to take the part of faculty mentors. She was proposing to do incredibly interesting and compelling research on the dreaming and wakeful moment imagery of women suffering from late-stage, terminal breast cancer. Given my background in cultural anthropology and my catholic reading tastes and habits, it was easy for me to learn the rudiments of overlapping literatures in psycho-oncology, illness narratives, and dream therapy. Trading once again on my considerable editing skills (remember, I had taken red- and other-colored pens to countless student papers over the years, not to say those of colleagues and of myself), I edited various drafts of a pretend research proposal. We worked together well to write a quite compelling research proposal that she submitted to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation (which was funded to the tune of \$33,000). Because she was already a professional, she was able to afford to pay me \$24/hour for, again, about twenty hours' work each fortnight.

The third point I have to make for all you would-be consultants is *to seek out as clients those who are most unlike you*. That is, in this case, my client, though a sharp individual with a first-rate mind and a great counseling practice, had, by her own admission, no idea as to how different qualitative methods and approaches were to those in her highly empirical, frankly quantitative field. Not that I needed to much, but wherever I could, *I highlighted those differences*. Create demand by making more clearly evident what the supply is of.

Another professional from the University of Texas-Austin wanted help transcribing and coding and analyzing taped interviews from his work in science education. English isn't his first language, either, but I was able to help him re-write and edit the end results. I found out about this gig because I subscribe to an electronic forum dedicated to users of Atlas.ti, the qualitative data software program I mentioned above. Once again, by responding immediately and in great detail, I was able to show him precisely how I could help him and why he'd be a fool not to hire me. *This* time it worked! We decided upon a "student discount" of \$19/hour because, well, he's still a student and really couldn't afford to pay me any more than that. I recently spent two full weeks with him in Austin, and enjoyed this work thoroughly. Racked up some frequent-flier miles, ate superb Tex-Mex at least twice a day, and designed a payment plan that will stretch well into the new year. My organizational skills came in really handy—I prepared for him an entire box's worth of color-coded articles, and showed him how to read and take notes, more or less as if he were my student. What could be simpler?

On that same e-mail list a college health educator posted a message such that he needed help coding and analyzing several score narratives that had been written by first-year undergraduate students who were writing in the wake of the fact that during the previous

academic year, eight students decided that life was not worth living. After devising and defining fifteen or so themes that I thought *emerged* from the narratives without too much *forcing* from my end (as the co-discoverer of Grounded Theory, Bernie Glaser, puts it), and after reading, commenting upon, and coding these expressions of early 21st-century college student angst and anomie, I drew up several tables to help him present his work more effectively. \$24/hour sounded about right to him, but I gave him a discount because of the relevance of the work he was doing and because I knew that I was going to enjoy this work intellectually.

This past summer, once again my close attention to listserv discussion forums paid off. A representative of Context-Based Research Group, based in Baltimore, Maryland, posted a message requesting the services of ethnographers in Portland, Chicago, and Atlanta, and I was Johnny-on-the-spot about replying, again, in lurid detail. They needed three ethnographers to investigate safety and security issues for their client; a large insurance company back east. My fourth suggestion to you is the fairly obvious one that *your first impression is likely going to be the most important one, so it had better be good*. I wrote in some detail of my skills and experience, but light-heartedly so. I projected a serious, professional aura, but without losing my sense of humor. Because she had helpfully already listed her company's website, I took the time to look at it carefully and comment thoughtfully thereupon. Above all else, my response was without error—there can be no typos, no misspellings, and no conceptual glitches. If they aren't going to hire you, *make sure that it isn't because of your sloppy approach to communication*. I got paid a lump sum for this work, and although it wasn't the most inspiring, intellectually, I learned some new skills, made about \$26/hour doing so, met three nice couples, got a chance to do another kind of writing, and got a wonderful parting gift—a nicely stitched tote bag I'll take with me overseas when I return to Papua New Guinea. I made sure that I didn't just meet, but well exceeded my deadlines, that I kept in constant contact with my employers, and that my final report (see Hammar, 2002b) was above and beyond what was expected of me, compellingly written, and valorizing of qualitative perspectives. I want to be hired again by them, and I did everything in my power to ensure so.

I think that the most interesting and personally compelling work that I've done as a consultant so far has been for a couple of counseling psychologists back east. As have several other clients, they posted a message on a qualitative research methods list-serve discussion forum. They requested assistance in coding and analyzing a single taped interview consisting of a focus group discussion moderated by one of them and also attended by eight White counseling trainees who were given racially provocative but still hypothetical counseling and supervisory situations to think about and with which to respond. Once again, my training as an academic and *qualitative* researcher snagged me the gig. Remember, qualitative researchers are clearly in the minority, so *use that to your advantage*. After convincing them that their transcription wasn't yet "qualitative" enough (e.g., West 1995), that I suspected that a second, more laborious re-transcription would pay handsome dividends, I did so, and then loaded it for them into Atlas.ti (Version 4.2) and coded the resulting 43-page transcription (it started out as 26 pages) by way of 20 major codes, which then the head client turned into eight. Together we thrashed out the meaning and evidence of this code and that, and I helped them edit the paper several times and eventually submit it to *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. (It had already in different form been rejected, first, because it was attempting to be *both* quantitative and qualitative, but second, because it

became *too* qualitative for counseling psychology journal editors.) Following another lengthy review process, it was once again rejected (without chance for resubmission), but in a most curious way, that is, it evinced the very same unacknowledgement of the reviewers' race as had been uncovered during the focus group interview. More interestingly (and tellingly), there were gaping misapprehensions of the, dare I say it, qualitative differences between qualitative and quantitative methods and instruments, modes of validation and representation. I showed so obviously how deeply I cared about this paper (in the five-page epistle to the Guest Editor I wrote on my own time) that they subsequently added me as a third author and after pushing it through two more drafts, re-submitted it to *The Counseling Psychologist*. I'm certain that it's going to be accepted this time. In addition, we've decided to co-write a paper (with me in the lead, this time) on the sociology-of-rejection of scientific papers. Once again, I've dipped as a good scholar should into several new literatures, learned new skills, and polished old ones. My background in anthropology (where Race and Ethnicity, Otherness, relativism and subjectivity abound) made me an absolutely perfect consultant for them.

Return to the fold, I mean, field

Meanwhile, my life has begun to take other productive turns. Over a year ago now, and quite out of the blue, I was contacted by a representative from the Deboin Peoples Foundation, an N.G.O. dedicated to the health and welfare of a set of villages in the so-called Binandere Tribal Area, in Ioma District, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea. Man, oh man, what I wouldn't give to be able to return to Papua New Guinea. I was petitioned to secure research funding (hey, piece of cake!) and then go out and collect baseline sociomedical data on everything from malaria and elephantiasis, sanitation and domestic violence to untreated STDs and tuberculosis, all so that 4th-year medical students from the Tropical Medicine Section of the University of Ljubijana, Slovenia can make, hopefully, the Binandere Tribal Area the site of their required internships on an annual basis. I have since written four research grants (one has already come through—woo-hoo!), made contact with two Papua New Guineans whom I plan to hire to become my research assistants, and have begun to learn yet several more new literatures about this province and these peoples. I'm more excited about these welcome turns of event than I can even express.

In the meantime, I'm earning income for myself and my family, and charging more or less what I believe my skills are worth (just in case you're wondering, my fees range from \$24-\$30/hour, and I give discounts to poor, starving students and to those whose research is aimed at progressive causes). I'm going to return soon, I hope, to a country about whose peoples and cultures I've cared deeply for the better part of two decades. Most importantly of all, however, I don't really even care any more what will happen when I get back. I've made up business cards, and I give them out everywhere I go. On them, I advertise my *nom-de-besogne*, "Methods Man," contact information, and occupational specialties, which I consider now to be 1) conceptualizing research methods and instruments; 2) writing and editing; 3) library-based research; 4) cultural diversity; 5) data coding and analysis; and 6) research grant-writing. When I return from Papua New Guinea, I'm going to get serious about launching a research project that has been my dream for several years, a long-term, multi-sited, multi-stranded, participatory project on the social structure and sexual geography of prostitution right here in my home town. I've already written up preliminary drafts of

research proposals, and will surely work on it in the weeks and months to come. While I'm not yet quite "livin' large," things are definitely looking up.

Consulting Dos and Don'ts

I'm led now to consider how I might help aspiring consultants, in transition either toward consulting in the first place, perhaps from another occupation, or toward another kind of consulting altogether.

1. Do take the time and make the investment to build and maintain an Internet website.

To this day, I haven't spent a single penny on advertising, and wouldn't think of starting now. Nevertheless, there are all kinds of free listing services, though you'll have to put up with lots of forms and unwanted spam for a while. I'm not going to say that it was through my web-site that I initially attracted most of my clients, but it is true that my web-site clinched several clients with whom I'd already spoken. My website includes writing samples, examples of past consultancies, a complete C.V., and many pages' worth of references and resources relevant to qualitative research. I've even used it in the classroom. It convinced several clients (and the supervisor of one) that I was indeed who I said I was.

2. Don't expect to make a lot of money in a hurry.

Keep your day job until you can afford to make a full-time transition to consulting—assuming that that's what you want to do. Try to think of this as a "sideline" gig for awhile, and use the money you earn to build a web-site, pay for advertising, purchase office supplies, and so forth. Try to put aside some of each paycheck, say 10% into your business.

3. Do go to guru.com and monster.com, among many other sites.

Not only are these web-sites choc-a-bloc full of full-time and part-time positions, but they will offer you good chances to reassess your skills and desires outside of an academic context. On guru.com, for example, you can practice your pitch-writing skills, re-format your academic C.V. for non-academic positions, and get a sense as to how else academics are being used in the workplace. If you manage to land a short-term gig, you'll get an idea as to what it might be like to work for others in this new way.

4. Don't ever make promises that you can't keep.

If you know a particular software package pretty well, say so, but if you've got it on your shelf and still haven't cracked it open, don't say that you're proficient in it when you aren't. If you make promises to clients, keep 'em. If you're stacked up with work, say so, and don't promise that you'll drop everything just to snag another client when you know that you can't or that you've promised others that you won't. At the completion of our work together, my clients have consistently said that they liked the fact that I was on top of correspondence, that I mailed packages when I said I would, and that I'd honored my commitments to them. Remember, these folks'll be the ones who will write recommendations to others on your behalf. Be more than merely professional—be excellent in your dealings with actual or potential clients.

5. Do take the time to look at other consultants' websites if they have them.

Use Google.com or other search engines to look up “qualitative methods,” “anthropology consultants,” “social science editors,” “qualitative resources,” and the like, and check out how they advertise themselves, what kinds of services and products they offer, and what kind of prose style they employ. Go ahead, write to them and ask for their advice—I did. Ask ‘em where they tend to get their clients and how they decided to charge what they do. Nancy Sullivan, for example, leads eco-tours in Papua New Guinea. Look her up.

6. If you're still a youngish academic, don't make the mistake of thinking that if you just keep plugging away, you'll eventually get a job.

Yes, it might happen, but statistically-speaking, in this day and age, your chances are dwindling as I write, and if you haven't gotten one by now, you probably won't. Sorry. Furthermore, don't make the mistake of thinking that academia is anywhere near a meritocracy. If merit had anything to do with it, well, I'd have gotten a job a long time ago, and lots of those with jobs wouldn't have. Merit has very, very little to do with it.

7. Do take assignments that you're not necessarily intellectually hot-and-bothered about.

Some of your work is going to be borrrrrinnnnngggggg, so get used to it. Don't take assignments that you can't in good conscience take, however. For example, I've had several Ph.D. candidates seek my help but in ways I'm not comfortable with. If they can't be open to their spouses, their cohort, and their dissertation supervisors about what you're doing for them, then don't take the gig. Ethics don't end for you just because you're a consultant, but rather, begin afresh.

8. If you want a tenure-stream position somewhere, don't make the mistake of focusing on becoming a great teacher.

My experience (and those of legions of others, I know) tells me that good teaching is inversely proportional to one's chances of snagging a good job. Good teaching only takes one away from the things that *really* count: getting grants (\$\$\$ for the university), getting published in the “right” journals, and developing less humane politics. Every time you stand up for principles that are right and good (whether it's a student whose parents can't fathom that Missy has a learning disability that you've had the temerity to point out, or a nasty case of plagiarism that occurs on the eve of Graduation), it'll be held against you, I absolutely guarantee. You won't likely face such ethical dilemmas as a consultant, for you can walk away before they occur.

9. Do take yourself seriously when deciding upon fee scales.

Professional editors are paid pretty good money to edit crappy prose. Good plumbers make a lot more than that. People pay good money to have professional grant-writers help secure grant monies for their organization. So, don't sell yourself short. By all means, negotiate flexibly with your clients as to what they can sustainably pay you—and then stick to it. Consider different scales for different kinds of work.

10. Don't hesitate to think of this as simply something that you'll do for awhile, but not necessary forever.

Given our increasing longevity, it's not at all wishful thinking to imagine having two, maybe three careers in our lifetime. Try it for a while, and if it's not for you, don't take it personally or feel that you've failed.

The End: an update, several weeks later

Administratively, things went from sour to rotten at my teaching post, and an entire two semesters' worth of courses (four, in all) were cancelled out from under me, despite the fact that I was prepared to honor my commitment to them and had made life decisions accordingly. Although I have enjoyed my students immensely this term, and hope to have left behind a lot of goodwill, in five days from now I'll walk out of the classroom for the last time (as least as a teacher). I'm sure that this is good news for my psyche, though I still hurt all over.

But that isn't even why I decided to write an update. Within the space of 18 hours, several wonderful things have happened to me, or are about to happen. For starters, two clients have returned to the fold, so to speak, and want my help again. No probs. But that isn't even the *great* news. I was told that, on the strength of a telephone interview I gave three weeks ago, I made the next-to-final cut for an absolutely dreamy job, a full-time, all-research-and-writing position in Dayton, Ohio, through Wright State University, involving sociomedical topics and qualitative research methods that are right up my alley. My previous background seems to have counted for a lot, and I believe that my experience this past year as a qualitative methods consultant pushed my candidacy over the top. It helped even further that I had my own website. I went to my job interview in Dayton last weekend, and for the first time in a long, long time, I slept okay in a strange bed, and came home feeling that I had acquitted myself as well as possible. It's an even better job than I thought, and I enjoyed greatly meeting everyone there. Wish me luck!

Somewhat more bizarrely, however, though no less happily, I have been approached about a full-time (three-years-in-length) position as a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Medical Research, in Goroka, capital town of the Eastern Highlands Province. Given the "culture area" in question (Papua New Guinea, instead of Dayton, Ohio) and the nature of my responsibilities and options, if the other position is a "dream job," then this is positively Nirvana, although perhaps a bit less stable financially and temporally. Nevertheless, it shows me that there is, in fact, life after academia. Oddly enough, the fellow who is recruiting me is the same guy who signed off on my research proposal regarding the work I wanted to do in Oro Province. My university experience counts heavily here, insofar as I'll need occasionally to "ride herd" (as if they were my students, sort of) over a few eager but not yet well-trained colleagues, as well as occasionally stand back and let them teach me, where I'm the student, just as happens several times each semester in the classroom. Not that I really needed practice, but this past year's worth of formulating and keeping deadlines will surely come in handy. The kicker in this job opening was clearly the extensive background in qualitative research methods--the proposed nationwide project into which he hopes I can jump with both feet flailing involves serosurveillance, epidemiology, and sexual health behavioral study. It will demand the application of both quantitative and qualitative methods and instruments, a flexible mind, and a degree of rigor as an ethnographer that would make Malinowski envious.

The End²: an update to the update

Well, I was offered the job in Papua New Guinea, and I've taken it! By the time you read this I will have settled in to my new home and work in Goroka at the Institute of Medical Research (<http://www.pngimr.org.pg>). I'm going to be in charge of at least the social scientific component of the nation's HIV/AIDS/STDs surveillance program, of training non-qualitative thinkers in at least the rudiments of qualitative methodologies, of writing research grants, of conceptualizing studies, of collecting data and writing them up, and of otherwise presenting findings professionally and otherwise. Guess I'll have to travel a bit throughout the insular Pacific . . . Not only that, but my soon-to-be boss has promised to be compromising about the proposed research in Oro Province, so I don't have to give that up in exchange for a job. I was worried that I was going to have to give up on that commitment, but in fact, he was impressed that that's the only concern I voiced about my candidacy. Not so. I guess that's my fifth and final point: *as tough as it may be sometimes, and even if no one else seems to anymore, be honest, stand up for the principles you know are right, and honor your commitments*. Do work that pleases you, do work for others in a manner that you'd want done for you, and charge what you think you're worth.

In closing, this little embarrassment of riches is beginning to make some sense. All my struggles and hard work in academe, all of my efforts to break into public health (I can't tell you how many other jobs I've been rejected for), and all of the time, effort, and money I have spent over the past several years applying for jobs are coming to "mean" something I couldn't have imagined unless and until I got off the train and started to hike around for awhile.

If there is any way I can help you or yours (colleagues, family members, students, what have you) as they either ponder an academic career or a transition away from there, please, by all means, contact me. I have a lot to say.

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