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Border Security and Immigration Policy Management in South Texas by the Numbers: Perception, Stories and the Knowledge Analytic

Terence M. Garrett

Introduction: A Brief Historical Background of the DHS and CBP

DHS was created in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as part of an overall strategy to protect the borders of the U.S. The Office of Homeland Security was originally designed to provide President George W. Bush with direct advice on how to manage the domestic side of the “War on Terror” that was part of the federal government’s plans to ostensibly combat terrorist attacks on USA territory. Congress wanted more “accountability” in the homeland security policy-front and urged President Bush to reorganize 22 separate agencies for other components of the federal government (e.g., agencies primarily from the Departments of Justice, Interior, Treasury, Energy, and Transportation) thereby affecting over 170,000 federal employees (Kettl 2007; Sylves 2015). This was one of the largest bureaucratic reorganizations in U.S. history second only to the Department of Defense creation in 1947.

There are three signal events that the DHS has been involved in since its beginning. Each is briefly examined to get an idea of what is important to the development of the newest cabinet-level department. The first was the creation of the DHS since September 11, 2001 (hereafter “9-11”). The 9-11 Commission Report outlined actions to be followed in terms of reorganization for homeland security. One of the issues included the National Security Agency (NSA), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Counterterrorism Division to foster increased communication, collaboration, and cooperation for intelligence operations particularly within the borders of the U.S. (Kettl 2007). The overall recommendations and attention drawn toward these separate agencies affected the entire reorganization of the DHS although the aforementioned agencies were not effectively changed. As Kettl (2007) noted, “The reasons used to develop the DHS came from political instead of safety motives” (53). One of the major consequences nonetheless was that the DHS took as its mantra “the War on Terror” and made it its primary focus – as depicted in its mission statements, dating back to its beginning with the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Title I, Section 101:

The primary mission of the Department is to ...

- (A) *prevent terrorist attacks* within the United States;
- (B) reduce the vulnerability of the United States to terrorism; and
- (C) minimize the damage, and assist in the recovery, from terrorist attacks that do occur within the United States (DHS 2002, Sec. 101, italics added for emphasis).

The mission statement exemplifies the primary executive-centered direction for the DHS. This departmental direction will have severe consequences later as natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina figure more prominently in what the DHS actually has to do in terms of protecting the homeland. The 2002 mission statement is a direct consequence of the 9-11 terrorist attacks.

The second event was Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 that drew public attention towards DHS in a very negative manner. In that catastrophic event, nearly 2,000 Americans lost their lives mainly due to the collapse of levees in New Orleans. DHS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) were determined to be primarily culpable for a weak and delayed response. The Department of Homeland Security was in a period of transition and transformation since its inception in 2003. DHS was created primarily as a direct result of the events surrounding 9-11. Hurricane Katrina also had the effect of causing DHS to reassess its mission because of that calamity that moved onshore impacting Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Florida on August 29, 2005. The “National Strategy for Homeland Security, October 2007” reads thusly:

The National Strategy for Homeland Security guides, organizes, and unifies our Nation's homeland security efforts. Homeland security is a responsibility shared across our entire Nation, and the Strategy provides a common framework for the following four goals:

- Prevent and disrupt terrorist attacks;
- Protect the American people, our critical infrastructure, and key resources;*
- Respond to and recover from incidents that do occur;* [and]
- Continue to strengthen the foundation to ensure our long-term success.

This updated Strategy, which builds directly from the first National Strategy for Homeland Security issued in July 2002, reflects our increased understanding of the terrorist threats confronting the United States today, incorporates lessons learned from exercises and real-world catastrophes – including Hurricane Katrina – and proposes new initiatives and approaches that will enable the Nation to achieve our homeland security objectives (DHS 2008a, para. 3, italics added for emphasis).

Despite the apparent change in focus away from being exclusively terrorist attack-oriented and movement towards more of an emphasis on natural disaster recovery, DHS through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as of 2008 remained primarily centered on terrorism. DHS officially defined homeland security in the “National Response Framework” as “a concerted national effort to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States, reduce America’s vulnerability to terrorism, and minimize the damage and recover from attacks that do occur” (DHS 2008b, para. 2). As such, DHS maintains that the terrorist attacks of 9-11 were acts of war against the U.S. The nation was at risk prior to 9-11 – vulnerable – yet the new DHS is designed to protect against terrorist threats, evolving and moving away yet again from primarily focusing on protecting the

American public from natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina. First and foremost, the war on terror remains on center stage due to the implications of 9-11. This tendency leads to the third event: the building of the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico.

The third event for consideration of DHS since its inception is the public works project of the border fence on the U.S.-Mexico land border, especially involving CBP. The development of DHS and CBP primarily from this point onward is analyzed in terms of the knowledge analytic (KA) in this assessment. The 2005 REAL ID and 2006 Secure Fence acts enabled the construction of border fence and surveillance apparatuses, portions of which were constructed at various points from San Diego, California to Brownsville, Texas. Border security was emphasized after 9-11 and the fence (or wall) construction was part and parcel to the convergence of migration policy and 9-11 terrorism issues. The cost of the fence was \$7.5 million per mile with 110 miles just for the Texas-Mexico border in the lower Rio Grande Valley, and there were approximately 670 miles of new construction total for the Boeing's SBI-Net contract representing billions of U.S. dollars (Garrett 2012). Border security became effectively the "new" defense industry for government contractors. Criticism from border communities, environmental and civil liberties groups ensued as resistance to the fence began. DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff in 2008 declared to those who opposed the border fence because of cultural, social, political, or environmental concerns,

It's time to grow up and recognize that if we're serious about this threat, we've got to take reasonable, measured but nevertheless determined steps to getting better security. I can guarantee if we don't make this change, eventually there will come a time when someone will come across the border exploiting the vulnerabilities in the system and some bad stuff will happen. And then there'll be another 9/11 commission and we'll have people come saying "Why didn't we do this?" (*El Paso Times* January 17, 2008, para.3).

With the secretary's words defending the need for the border fence, opposition to it was supposed to be discredited. The public works project of DHS was underway.

The border fence initiative of DHS brought further criticism from academe. Maril (2011) concluded that the border fence represented an obstacle to be overcome by communities living on both sides of the Rio Grande in South Texas and Northeastern Mexico. Garrett and Storbeck (2011) criticized the border fence as being a simulacrum – an image of security that resulted in *insecurity* – that created heterotopic conditions between the fence and the actual border designed to keep out the *homo sacer* (undocumented border crossers) (Agamben 1998). Garrett (2012) noted, "The wall construction came about through an alliance of anti-migrant groups, who wanted a border fence, and the events of 9-11 that gave the political impetus for its completion, with corporate interests, under the guise of security" (36). Corporate influence combined with an "attentive-to-their-needs" DHS Secretary created the necessity and ongoing reality of the border wall.

All three of these events have shaped what comprises DHS and its constituent agencies today. The newest federal department in the U.S. government has dealt with crises as it has been established after combining agencies from other departments and creating essentially new entities.

Next examined is what the reorganization means to executives, managers, and workers within the department. Previous qualitative research approaches are examined to place the knowledge

analytic in a scholarly context, focusing on methods involving storytelling. The importance of “numbers” to the CBP and DHS is analyzed by workers and managers in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. The knowledge analytic is recounted, developed, and placed in the context of understanding personnel in affected government agencies. Then one agency will be evaluated primarily – CBP subordinate unit, the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) – within the DHS organizational milieu, although consideration of other DHS agencies is included.

Previous Qualitative Theoretical and Methodological Explanations and Stories for Understanding Worker Knowledge in the U.S. Border Patrol

Analyses of the USBP are not numerous since joining DHS. The federal law enforcement agency is difficult to obtain direct information, whether stories or data, particularly concerning its personnel operations (Garrett et al. 2005). USBP is considered overall to be a historically secretive agency as whistleblowers have had difficulty getting internal problems exposed to Congress and the public (Washington 2017). However, some scholarly work is available employing qualitative methods. Rivera and Tracy (2014) used an interpretive participant observation study method demonstrating that the Border Patrol agents are “dirty workers” as they work in harsh conditions dealing with stigmatized populations, undocumented border crossers or criminals, who seek to “capture and deport undocumented immigrants with the use of coercion and force” (203). USBP agents learn their knowledge “through tacit understandings gained by experience and sense making” acquired “on the job” working with others in the organization (Rivera et al. 2014, 203). One of the authors further elaborated with an interpretive ethnographic research approach analyzing USBP agent work as “emotional dirty work” (Rivera 2015). After following agents in the field for 2.5 years, she described their work as “work that society considers physically, socially, or morally objectionable ... perform[ing] emotional duties and emotional labor, which are often stigmatized by the public” (198). These studies are important to understanding what USBP does, and they parallel the knowledge analytic here insofar as agents working in the field do the actual hands-on job based on dealing with others in a tough environment under difficult conditions. This work separates agents in the field from their office supervisors (managers) and executives higher up the administrative ladder.

In the next section, differences between everyday working experiential knowledge, or dirty work, and management and executive knowledges, is illustrated with a story from the Border Patrol in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. The Federal Employees Viewpoint Survey of 2015 was discussed by the Rio Grande Valley Sector Chief and the local National Border Patrol Council (union) leader. The methodological approach taken here is to make use of stories available through various media sources, congressional testimony, and personal accounts given to the author over a period of fifteen years.

Numbers as Seen from the Customs and Border Protection, Rio Grande Valley Sector

When the numbers are on the low side to the point where they are worst in the entire federal government according to the FEVS, then executives are held to account by Congress and the USA public. This problem is analyzed and assessed by examining CBP sector personnel in the Rio

Grande Valley. CBP agents are not too excited or happy about their work, with the notable exception, perhaps, of the Rio Grande Valley sector. Kristian Hernandez, staff writer with *The Monitor* newspaper in McAllen, Texas, interviewed the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Sector Chief, Mr. Manuel Padilla and the National Border Patrol Council (NBPC) union local president, Mr. Chris Cabrera, concerning the 2015 FEVS Survey and how it was interpreted by them (May 28, 2016). According to Hernandez, the FEVS data specific to the CBP RGV Sector indicated 54% of CBP employees were satisfied with their job, 27% were unsatisfied, with 18% neutral (para. 5-6). With 3,000 employees in the RGV Sector, Chief Padilla said the FEVS numbers do not reflect an accurate picture because of the low response rate (para. 8). Padilla further stated,

We have a lot of work to do We need to increase the responses to the survey. We had about a 19 percent response rate to those surveys and what I would like to get is a 60 or 70 percent response rate (para. 9) On the positive side, if you compare this sector to other areas, we actually scored higher If you were to do a survey of the people that you saw today out there working, I would venture to say that you would get very high numbers, but what happens is because of the low response rate you get people that want to express their frustrations (para. 22-23).

The contextually embedded story (Boje 1991; 1995) here is that upper management wanted better performance by the workers on the FEVS in terms of the number of employees who respond to the survey in the hopes that the overall job satisfaction rate would go up – thus making the RGV Sector look better to DHS leadership in Washington. In order to improve the numbers, the Sector Chief is “working with local union to help them meet their goal in the coming years” (para. 10). Local union leader Mr. Cabrera said, “Padilla is the first chief to approach the union to discuss solutions to the low morale numbers reflected by the annual survey” (para. 11). Here we have key components of the KA demonstrated as then-DHS Secretary Johnson’s concern (as an executive) with the poor FEVS data addressed by the RGV Sector Chief Padilla and the Local NBPC President Cabrera. Cabrera puts the situation in a different manner:

Overall people in the sector love their job DHS-wide people are unhappy with their jobs, but that doesn’t mean that the guys hate their jobs. They are just dissatisfied with certain aspects of what we do or don’t do They see a lot of crap that comes along with it, with some of these rules and policies that come down from D.C. as far as how to do things or what’s needed. What’s needed is people need to come down here and take a look at what we actually do and how to do it instead of letting the decisions be made from the glass palace up in D.C. (para. 12-13).

Management is top-heavy and the cause of wasteful, bloated bureaucracy in the eyes of the local union chief. According to the union leader, the primary problems are DHS managers and executives who make rules, shuffle paper, and make policies detrimental to the CBP agents who are doing the actual work.

Mr. Cabrera previously testified before the US Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on March 17, 2015, where he made a number of points indicating that more agents in the field were needed along the border and that there were too many in management positions as compared to agents on the ground. He also said that the apprehension rate of illegal immigrants

and drug traffickers was significantly lower than the 75 percent management and executives in the DHS were giving Congress:

I want to be crystal clear – the border is not secure. That is not just my opinion or the position of the NBPC. Ask any line Agent in the field and he or she will tell you that at best we apprehend 35-40% of the illegal immigrants attempting to cross. This number is even lower for drug smugglers who are much more adept at eluding capture. How can this enormous gap exist between what the DHS tells you here in Washington and what our Agents know to be the truth in the field? Frankly, it is how you manipulate the statistics and let me give you one example. A key metric in determining our effectiveness is what is known as the “got aways.” If we know from footprints or video surveillance that 20 individuals crossed the border and we ultimately catch 10 of them, then we know that 10 “got away” (National Border Patrol Council March 17, 2015, para. 5-6).

With the union leader’s comments, there is revealed another important aspect of the KA: respect for the work of the agents in the field and worker knowledge that *cannot be known* in Washington, D.C. The implication that the higher-ups in D.C. are too far away physically and in the organizational hierarchy to know actually what they (the locals) were doing. Or, put in terms of the KA, DHS leaders do not understand and are unable to perceive the workers’ knowledge, relying on numbers imposed from executives and managers instead of the agents’ reality. The testimony by Mr. Cabrera also had an added effect: it made the US-Mexico border appear more dangerous than what DHS executives and management presented, effectively upping the ante for more funding for CBP agents and border security equipment and apparatuses. In this case, the NBPC is effectively working alongside with the homeland defense industry to procure more resources – personnel and equipment – from Congress and the American taxpayer.

The Knowledge Analytic (KA) and the Phenomenology of Perception Briefly Defined

The knowledge analytic has implications for understanding organizations in a way that allows for knowledges (plural) to be judged in a manner that exposes political power relations in institutions such as DHS and CBP. Human organizations are better understood by examining all manner of how people know their work – and the important implication thereof. Executives, managers, and workers know their work *differently* in modern organizations, and yet have to work together. Problems occur in modern organizations as executive and management knowledges are valued more than worker knowledge (See, for example, Garrett 2001; Garrett 2004). These knowledge differences are analyzed in the following sections.

The best illustration of phenomenological theory with regard to the problem of arithmetic knowledge and experiential knowledge was first indicated by Husserl (1931/1969) as illustrated in Garrett (2001, 84) as the tension between quantitative knowledge and knowledge based on experience that is key to knowledge differences between managers and workers. Husserl’s phenomenological insight uncovers the difference between arithmetic (quantitative) knowledge and everyday experiential knowledge in understanding the life world and is the foundation of the knowledge analytic. The arithmetic world versus the natural world, or fact-world – or every day lived experience – are at times incompatible. Modern organizations such as DHS are established

in a pyramid form based on hierarchy, with executives at the top of the pyramid who are farthest away from the actual fact-world of the workers who dwell at the bottom of the organizational structure. Executives are at the pinnacle of the power relationship structure and work primarily with numbers, and this insight is based on Husserl's philosophical concept of the arithmetic world, or standpoint, of knowledge. Managers know their work as intermediaries between the more abstract, arithmetic world of executives and the everyday fact-world of workers who do the actual hands-on work of the organization. Hummel (2006) also acknowledged Husserl's importance to the KA in terms of the power relationship between executives, managers, and workers in the organizational pyramid and what they know.

The work of Merleau-Ponty (1962/2009; 1968) is also important in terms of understanding the phenomenology of perception. His work is critical to the further development of the KA as "perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out and is presupposed by them... When I return to myself from an excursion into the realm of dogmatic common sense or of science, I find, not a source of intrinsic truth, but a subject destined to the world" (Merleau-Ponty 1962/2009, xi-xii; in Correa-Cabrera et al. 2014, 243). Courses of action taken by workers, managers, executives in DHS, members of Congress, the American public, undocumented border crossers, and others perceive how to achieve preferences and upon reflection offer after-the-fact rationalizations whether to use arithmetic, scientific, or experiential-based knowledge. Merleau-Ponty (1968) further notes through reflection and interrogation that "the illusion of illusions is to think now that to tell the truth we have never been certain of anything but our own acts, that from the beginning perception has been an inspection of the mind, and that reflection is only the perception returning to itself, the conversion from the knowing of the thing to knowing of oneself of which the thing was made, the emergence of a 'binding' that was the bond itself" (37). In terms of the KA, the position between knowing where we are in the world as "philosophy is not science, because science believes it can soar over its object and holds the correlation of knowledge with being as established, whereas philosophy is the set of questions wherein he who questions is himself implicated by the question" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 27). Science in public organizations such as DHS and CBP dominates working knowledge – the dirty work. With the KA, executive rationality – mathematics and management science in the modern hierarchy – can lose embodiment, self-reflection, and interrogation, thus losing the value of "dirty work" knowledge, without being situated in the world. The perception is that worker knowledge is dominated by the executive and management suites and *does not belong* at the same level in the world. An appreciation of understanding these aspects of the knowledge analytic is critical in context to organizations and society. Perception, based on reflection and interrogation of the relationship of self to others and things in context, matters. Stories and narratives are a reflection of perception.

DHS Reorganization from 2003 and the "Morale Surveys" of 2007 to 2017

DHS senior executives at its inception controlled the overall organizational-management narrative, imposing its power at the top of the organizational pyramid downward. As noted by Garrett (2010), "the reorganization process and the impetus for restructuring driven by ... catastrophic events [e.g., 9-11] as a pretext to change and politicize the pay system by giving more discretion to handpicked managers to control raises and wage increases, preclude union participation,

streamline the grievance process in favor of management over labor, and enabling executives and managers to fire employees more easily without the due process procedures previously in place under the [previous] civil service merit system” (350). Garrett and Peterson (2005) attempted to conduct a survey based on the knowledge analytic of the Border Patrol in 2003 (then still under the Department of Justice) as requested by the McAllen Sector Border Patrol leadership. The survey never took place as the Undersecretary of Management for the “new” DHS would not allow the local agency to implement it. Questions that were to have been asked generally related to attitudes about the new DHS leadership, communication between local sector personnel and Washington, whether the new organization would be executive and management or employee-centered, and other issues such as union representation and equity issues (2005, 49-51). Also added was an open-ended question designed to get narrative responses to matters related to the transition from DOJ to DHS. The general idea behind the survey was to gather data (i.e., numerical for arithmetic knowledge apprehension) to give executives in Washington, D.C. impressions of what managers and workers were experiencing given the organizational transformation. The survey attempt did not transpire. The missed opportunity to measure – or to get a snapshot in time and space of – the McAllen, Texas, Border Patrol Sector prior to the transition from DOJ to DHS, all 1,800 employees, did not occur. The article became a call for the new department to find the state of perceptions, attitudes, and values of federal workers and management.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) (and the DHS) eventually began to measure employee attitudes – towards their immediate supervisors and upper management – in 2007, well after the department was established. The Federal Employees Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) is the closest approximation to the Garrett and Peterson (2005) Border Patrol Survey in 2003 that was an attempt to measure quantitative data and qualitative differences, and what they know, between executives, managers, and workers.

If someone were to attempt to measure the success of the DHS transition, one measuring stick might be the annual FEVS, which while somewhat useful for the KA is perhaps limited because of the lack of clear discernment between workers, management, and executives in the overall instrument. *The important thing to note here is that the DHS organization – executives, managers, and workers – believes that the measuring tool is valid or has some merit in determining where the employees are – where they stand – in each annual survey. FEVS is executive and management driven. Perception is key here and matters.* Executives know their work by the numbers, or Husserl’s arithmetic knowledge, hence the high value they place on the survey as a blunt instrument of power over managers and workers implemented to improve morale. DHS reorganization occurred in 2002-2003, but nothing was quantitatively measured by surveys in a comprehensive manner until 2007 with FEVS. A reporter for *The Washington Post* in January 2015 noted that the DHS has consistently the lowest employee morale in the entire federal government:

Since taking over the department in late 2013, [DHS Secretary Jeh] Johnson has focused on raising morale and stemming high turnover, problems that date to the George W. Bush administration. Many DHS employees have said in the annual government “viewpoint” survey of federal employees that their *senior leaders are ineffective*; that the department discourages innovation, and that promotions and raises are not based on merit. Others have described in interviews how a stifling bureaucracy and relentless congressional criticism

makes DHS an exhausting, even infuriating, place to work (Markon 2015, para. 8, italics added for emphasis).

Even more remarkable from the Markon article under the subsection “We hid it” is this section:

Three years ago, officials in the department’s office of health affairs, which provides expertise on national security medical issues, began to wonder about the health of one of their own programs. In response to low scores on the viewpoint survey, officials had set up a program, DHSTogether, aimed at making DHS “one of the best places to work in the Federal government.” But it wasn’t working out....“It was not a very good light to shine on any of us, so we just hid it,” said one DHS employee familiar with the report, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of fear of retaliation by supervisors. The report, released in September 2013, concluded that DHSTogether had been starved of money and support from DHS leaders ... (para. 14-18).

The recommendation by the office of health affairs was to get senior leaders (executives) to become more involved in improving morale. The DHS, with the lowest, or near lowest, morale of any federal department or agency in the federal government for many years running (Katz October 2, 2015), is negatively affected – this phenomenon is explored more below by assessing the latest surveys (Table 1 below) – and this has been so since its creation.

The FEVS is conducted annually from 2007 to the present. The results provided here represent the attitudes that workers have towards management and executives in DHS as manifested by the survey. The 2015, 2016, and 2017 DHS surveys (grouped together in the three-year increment by OPM) show dissatisfaction by federal employees concerning their immediate supervising managers and upper management – also compared with the comprehensive FEVS total (See Table 1). However, the importance of the surveys lies in the fact that executives, managers, and, in some instances, workers believe in the power of the instrument to demonstrate where they stand in the organization. Brandon Judd, National Border Patrol Council president, in his testimony before the US Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee noted:

...the survey paints a harrowingly bleak picture of the Border Patrol as an agency. In almost every survey question, the Border Patrol was ranked lower than CBP, who was ranked lower than DHS, who was ranked lower than the rest of the Federal Government. The results of the survey are manifesting themselves in our current and historical attrition rate (HSGAC March 22, 2017, para. 15).

Similarly, Chris Crane, president of the National Immigration and Customs Enforcement Council 118, testified at the same HSGAC on March 22, 2017, “As with DHS in general, and other component agencies within DHS, such as TSA, the Secret Service and Border Patrol, ICE is suffering from a toxic and failed management culture; an absence of leadership. In 2014 ICE was dead last in morale among 314 federal agencies surveyed; in 2015 ICE was second from last, and last year sixth from last” (para. 6).

Table 1:
Selected Questions from the 2015-2017 Federal Employees Viewpoint Survey Results
*Percent Positive**

24. In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way. (2016- 34% All FEVS**/+1 [2015]); 2017- 36.1% All FEVS***/+2 [2016])	25.67 (2016)/ +2.27 (2015) 29.4 (2017)/ + 3.73 (2016)
30. Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes. (2016- 44.8% All FEVS/+1.9 [2015]; 2017- 47.3% All FEVS/+2.3[2016])	31.42 (2016) +2.83 (2015) 37.2 (2017)/ + 5.78 (2016)
37. Arbitrary action, personal favoritism and coercion for partisan political purposes are not tolerated. (2016- 53% All FEVS/+2 [2015]; 2017- 54.8% All FEVS/+1.8 [2016])	36.92 (2016) +3.08 (2015) 41.5 (2017) +4.58 (2016)
39. My agency is successful at accomplishing its mission. (2016- 74% All FEVS/+1 [2015]; 2017- 76.3% All FEVS/+2.3 [2016])	60.78 (2016) +0.93 (2015) 68.8 (2017) +8.02 (2016)
40. I recommend my organization as a good place to work. (2016- 64% All FEVS/+1 [2015]; 2017- 66.3% All FEVS/+2.3 [2016])	48.65 (2016) +2.87 (2015) 55.7 (2017) +7.05 (2016)
53. In my organization, senior leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce. (2016- 41% All FEVS/+2 [2015]; 2017- 43.2% All FEVS/+3.2 [2016])	27.85 (2016) +2.55 (2015) 33.5 (2017) +5.65 (2016)
54. My organization's senior leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity. (2016- 52% All FEVS/+2 [2015]; 2017- 54.5% All FEVS/+2.5 [2016])	39.32 (2016) +2.47 (2015) 44.2 (2017) +4.88 (2016)
61. I have a high level of respect for my organization's senior leaders. (2016- 53% All FEVS/+2 [2015]; 2017- 55.6% All FEVS/+2.6 [2016])	40.39 (2016) +2.28 (2015) 46.2 (2017) +5.81 (2016)

* “Percent Positive” is defined in the survey as “strongly agree” and “agree.” The remainder are “neither agree or disagree” or “disagree” or “strongly disagree,” are also correspondingly higher for DHS than all combined federal employees.

(“DHS employees provided feedback through the 2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), which was conducted by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) between May 5 and June 16. The survey was sent to a sampling of employees randomly selected by OPM. Of the 93,709 DHS employees who received the survey, 46,991 responded answering questions in the areas of leadership and knowledge management, results-oriented performance culture, talent management and job satisfaction.” Retrieved April 25, 2017 at <https://www.dhs.gov/departments-homeland-security-annual-employee-survey>.)

**Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey 2016, Office of Personnel Management. Retrieved 4/25/17 at https://www.fedview.opm.gov/2016FILES/2016_FEVS_Gwide_Final_Report.PDF.

*** **Source:** *Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey 2017 – Part 1 and Part 2.* The questions presented here are from a three-year period, 2015-2017, by the Office of Personnel Management, and represent a sample of the questions in the FEVS related to the knowledge analytic. Please note that the data generally represent an incremental improvement by DHS over the three-year survey period, however, DHS still lags well behind the overall federal employee average.

In the following sections, stories and narratives will be contrasted and compared with the FEVS findings and the problems that have been occurring in the DHS since its inception.

Border Security and DHS Transition: Worker and Manager Testimonials on the DHS Reorganization in the RGV

While conducting research on border security issues and during the initial stages of the DHS reorganization, Garrett (2010) interviewed DHS employees who expressed themselves concerning “the job.” Some of the comments recounted here are as follows:

- The [Border Patrol] agency hires and promotes incompetent people nowadays who rise through the ranks based on their ability to suck up to the boss. It wasn’t nearly as bad under the old rules. (A Former Agent of Nine Years in Brownsville, Texas)
- ICE (Immigration, Customs and Enforcement) is a screwed-up entity. I came over from Customs and the INS folk and others haven’t a damn clue about law enforcement. They’re dangerous! (An ICE Supervisor of more than 20 years in McAllen, Texas).
- I had to get the hell out before the transition to DHS. As a member of the union, my boss’s boss was out to get me and all of the union guys out of the [local Customs] place. We all feared what was going to happen to us (A former U.S. Customs Supervisor of 15 years in Hidalgo, Texas) (Garrett 2010, 343-344).

The central theme of all these complaints came from these employees right around the time of the transition to DHS (2003-2004) from the previous governmental department (e.g., Department of Justice and the Department of the Treasury) within the “new” DHS agencies. The workers were clearly angry with executives and upper-level managers deciding the work during the departmental reorganization. As noted previously, effectively abandoning civil service protections offered to workers under their “old” departments in the wake of the reorganization allowed for multiple changes to take place, including in grievance representation, collective bargaining from unions, pay banding, and a loss of organizational culture and identity (Garrett and Peterson 2005). These stories, complaints, and issues are not captured and reflected in large-scale quantitative data surveys.

On the Riverboat: Worker Knowledge Ignored

In 2011, a Customs and Border Protection airboat officer told the author the story of how she was fired upon while on duty along the Rio Grande. The work is dangerous in that when shots are fired from the Mexican side of the border, the boat team is required by the book to beach the craft on the USA side, seek cover in the usually high ground cover along the banks of the river, and then call in back up support. The officer described the shooters as possibly being “coyotes” (human traffickers smuggling undocumented border crossers into the USA), drug cartel personnel, or other criminals, all who have incentives and opportunities to take out CBP personnel – particularly airboat agents relatively vulnerable and exposed on the river. The officer said she was shot on one occasion in a location where the border wall was close enough to the bank that it was not possible to beach the craft and get under cover in the brush. (**Note** that the border fence, for the most part, is not near the actual river rather it often is located several hundred yards or more away from the flowing water and up to well over a mile or more away from the border in many places. The middle of the Rio Grande is the actual border by treaty between Texas and Mexico).

The act of being wounded in the line of duty may not seem to be much of a story other than recounting the sacrifice that the workers in the CBP face in securing USA borders. However, the officer had more to say concerning what she believed to be an unnecessary burden on CBP airboat officers and their physical safety. The agents in her group as well as herself had expressed concerns to their supervisors about the border fence where it would impede their ability to avoid being shot. She and her coworkers were effectively shut out of the discussion and were told not to bring up the subject of the impact of the border fence location again. Direct experience and worker knowledge were ignored by management.

A CBP Agent’s Description of a Section of the Border Fence

Sociologist Lee Maril (2011) interviewed Agent “Sparrow” concerning the building of a section of the border fence in the Rio Grande Valley. The story involved fence construction near the town of Donna, Texas, in response to pressure from the White House in 2008. The statements by Agent Sparrow are as follows:

You got to remember that CBP is not calling the shots on the barrier [border fence.] You and I and the agents at the Weslaco [Texas] station know Donna is not a hot spot. But DHS is under the gun from Washington. They have to build so many miles of fence by such and such a date. The rumor at sector is the barrier at Donna is supposed to cost \$50 million. They have the money. DHS says build the barrier, they build the barrier...

It’s a rumor about President Bush’s State of the Union Address. He said he was going to build sixty miles of border fence by such and such a date. DHS did not plan for sixty miles. But the president says it to a national audience, so DHS has to get it done. What I hear is that it was a mistake. Shit happens. We really don’t need it [the wall] at Donna, but DHS builds it so the naysayers can’t call the president a liar. I do know for a fact they never asked CBP about it...

You could say it was politics (Maril 2011, 223-224).

Executive pressure based on political priorities is brought to bear with this story that superseded professional judgment at the midlevel and lower levels of CBP.

In the next section, the aforementioned stories described above are framed and analyzed employing the knowledge analytic.

Border Security, the DHS, and Other Federal Agencies: Perception and a Knowledge Analytic

The knowledge analytic is applied to DHS and border security stories presented previously. Starting with DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff, there is a strong desire to complete the building of the border fence on time and on budget. With the backdrop of terrorism and keeping “illegal aliens” out of the U.S., his focus is temporal/spatial, concentrating on numbers and deadlines – the level of knowledge for executives – with a political agenda making an impression on his work. Additionally, Secretary Chertoff was responsible and “survived” the political failure of the Hurricane Katrina debacle in 2005. DHS leaders were attempting to show the Bush administration and

Congress that the huge public works program – the building of the 670-mile long border wall along the U.S.-Mexico border – could be successfully accomplished, and it was successfully concluded by 2010. As of 2017, the Trump administration wants to continue the wall all the way across the 1,954-mile U.S.-Mexico border.

In the story of the CBP Rio Grande Sector, Chief Padilla, as the manager, exhibits feeling the pressure of the low FEVS numbers in response to the DHS Secretary's call for improved morale, defined as better FEVS scores and that more CBP employees needed to respond to the survey, thereby improving the "numbers." The local union president believed that the local workers loved their jobs, but that nationally DHS workers were unhappy with theirs. Most of the "crap" that comes along with the workers' jobs comes from the "glass palace" in D.C. from those executives who knew nothing of the actual work agents did in the field and misrepresented the "real" numbers of illegal immigrants and drug traffickers to Congress and American citizens. Also, the NBPC has pushed for additional numbers of border agents in Congress, although CBP has trouble getting enough border patrol agents to maintain current operational levels as, for example, most recently, CBP is supposed to have 21,370 agents but has 19,500 or about 1,870 fewer than required (Moran 2017).

The previous Secretary of DHS, Jeh Johnson, as of 2013, was concerned also with the numbers. In this case, the emphasis is on DHS employee morale, as demonstrated through the FEVS, and maintaining enough employees at all levels of the organization for it to function well and accomplish departmental objectives. DHS has so far undergone through three major events – the reorganization aftermath of 9-11 (after having been effectively created by the terrorist attacks), Hurricane Katrina, and the continuing building of the border fence – but overall agency morale has been comparatively low when considering the rest of the federal government's departments and agencies. Again, there is a preoccupation at the top of the organizational pyramid with the numbers. Secretary Johnson voiced some empathy for employees of the organization. The question is whether Johnson has a genuine care for DHS workers or is simply concerned with getting the work of the department accomplished without the annoyance of constantly being subject to congressional oversight committees. Much of this was due to the fact that the department scored poorly on the FEVS. The numbers demonstrated by the survey place pressure on the executive.

There are several examples of workers subjected to the numbers, time, and space limitations imposed from above. The CBP riverboat captain was shot and wounded when the border fence was placed too close to the Rio Grande whereby she could not beach the craft for her own safety. This happened even when she and her co-workers complained about the safety hazard. In the instance of the border patrol agent in Weslaco, Texas, that was interviewed by the sociologist Lee Maril, a section of the border fence was built on a whim. The agent commented that the fence was not needed in a location near Donna, Texas. The fence section was placed there upon an interpretation of an unspecified directive from President George W. Bush by an executive in the DHS simply because 60 miles of fence needed to be completed by the time of the president's speech – even though the section of fence was deemed unnecessary. Finally, there are various examples of workers commenting on aspects of DHS's reorganization that did not make any sense to them in terms of what they interpreted as actually getting the border and homeland security work done, with their expert knowledge ignored.

The *knowledge analytic* is useful in ascertaining differences in knowledges within complex organizations such as DHS and its constituent agencies working in homeland and border security in the USA. As a result of the initial events creating DHS, the department has faced a number of obstacles that have been difficult to overcome. Perceptions matter as poor morale in DHS based perhaps previously, though not conclusively, on terrorist and natural disasters beyond its capacity to cope adequately with accomplishing its missions and long-term reorganization. There is a possibility that these issues involving the organization were reflected through the ongoing scores in the FEVS. Demonstrable differences between appreciation of separate working, management, and executive knowledge – all contribute to misunderstanding problems and the lack of finding solutions that persist in reorganization and management reforms pursued by executive leadership in the organization who are primarily concerned to *get the morale survey numbers higher*. Since the Trump administration has come into power, DHS agencies such as CBP and ICE may have increased morale due to increased attention and “The ... administration’s far-reaching plan to arrest and deport vast numbers of undocumented immigrants has been introduced in dramatic fashion in the early months of 2017. And much of that task has fallen to thousands of ICE officers who are newly emboldened, newly empowered and already getting to work” (Kulish et al. 2017, para. 3). Furthermore, changes may be on the horizon as “‘Morale amongst our agents and officers has increased exponentially since the signing of the orders,’ the unions representing ICE and Border Patrol agents said in a joint statement after President Trump issued the executive orders on immigration late last month” (para. 8). The 2017 FEVS numbers are in as “of the 15 cabinet-level agencies surveyed, DHS achieved the largest increase in both the Employee Engagement Index (EEI) and the Global Satisfaction Index (GSI). The DHS EEI increased four percentage points from 2016-2017 and the GSI increased six percentage points during the same time period” (DHS Releases Results of 2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, para. 2). DHS, nonetheless, is still near the bottom of the FEVS. These problems in the bureaucracy may persist due in large part to the lack of appreciation of the differences between knowledges and the lack of reflection and interrogation of the relationship between executives, managers, and workers. Power rests at the top of the organizational pyramid and worker knowledge is devalued at best and ignored at worst although in the case of the NBPC union leader workers may on occasion exhibit the potential for power. The story of how effective DHS and its agencies such as CBP is cannot be told simply by the numbers. Narratives presented by workers, managers, and executives and the perceptions generated by them matter as to how they know their work and tells the story of the organization. Executives and managers should make themselves aware of worker stories and take them fully into account to improve DHS and CBP, reflecting upon what they mean, and making improvements in the affected organizations.

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