

in countries hampered by heavy-handed bureaucracies. “China has been able to grow fast while being ranked among the most corrupt countries,” Svensson notes.

Bribery, embezzlement, and other forms of corruption cost the world \$1 trillion a year, by one estimate. (If ill-gotten gains are put back in circulation rather than stashed overseas, corruption’s economic damage may be blunted.) Grotesque examples of corruption are legion. In Angola, where most people live on less than \$1 a day, nearly \$1 billion in oil revenues vanished from state coffers in 2001—three times the amount of all the humanitarian aid the country received from abroad. Corruption also distorts economic incentives. Studies show, for example, that in sub-Saharan Africa peasant farmers avoid rapacious officials “by taking refuge in subsistence production,” thus sacrificing productivity and living standards. Some firms inevitably specialize in gaining competitive advantage through political connections—a further drag on economic efficiency.

Research generally confirms the

Some scholars argue that bribery and other shady practices can help firms operate efficiently in countries hampered by heavy-handed bureaucracies.

commonsense proposition that corruption is greatest in countries with low levels of income and education. But there’s still great variation. Argentina, Russia, and Venezuela all rank relatively high in income, education, and corruption. Svensson adds that researchers have not produced much systematic evidence for the notion that history, culture, and religion are very influential—that former French colonies in the developing world, for example, have more regulation and therefore more corruption.

What can be done? “Most anticorruption programs rely on legal and financial institutions—judiciary, police, and financial auditors—to enforce and strengthen accountability in the public sector,” notes Svensson. But in many poor countries, those

very enforcement institutions “are weak and often corrupt themselves.” Pouring more money into them doesn’t seem to help. Another favorite prescription of aid donors and international organizations is to pay higher wages to civil servants. But that works only if enforcement institutions are strong.

Svensson’s own research suggests that the most corrupt countries are those that also most restrict economic activity and the news media. Selective deregulation of the economy, depriving bureaucrats and politicians of the leverage to extract payoffs, is one promising avenue of reform. Grass-roots monitoring is another. Between 1991 and 1995, local officials and politicians in Uganda siphoned off all but 13 percent of the grant money primary schools were supposed to receive from the central government. When Uganda’s government began publicizing the monthly transfer payments to the schools in newspapers, parents and school staff were able to act. In 2001, the schools got 80 percent of the money earmarked for them.

## SOCIETY

# The Tyranny of Cheer

**THE SOURCE:** “From Good Cheer to ‘Drive-By Smiling’: A Social History of Cheerfulness” by Christina Kotchemidova, in *Journal of Social History*, Fall 2005.

FORGET THE EAGLE. AMERICA’S national symbol should be that yellow smiley face reproduced on everything

from T-shirts to Wal-Mart billboards. As an outgrowth of its capitalist emphasis on individual self-worth, America has developed a national ethic of cheerfulness, writes Christina Kotchemidova, a culture and communication instructor at New

York University.

We didn’t always walk around with smiles on our faces. Early in American history melancholy prevailed, just as it did in Europe. Traditional Christianity promoted suffering as a path to spiritual refinement. Patience was definitely a virtue—especially since little could be done about perceived injustices in the early-modern Anglo-Saxon world.

But with the rise of the American middle class in the 18th century came

a new emphasis on human agency and individualism, and on the necessity of managing one's emotions in order to succeed. Economic ruin was often associated with a lack of moral and emotional control. "Moderns developed an impatience with helplessness, which was accompanied by a distaste for grief and later translated into male aversion to tears," writes Kotchemidova. "Since cultural meanings form by opposition, the opposite emotion to sadness—cheerfulness—began to serve as a symbol for virtue."

In the New World, European courtesy was being displaced by "a new, casteless nicety . . . based on friendliness." Among the first Europeans to note the trait was British journalist William Cobbett, a 1792 émigré who repeatedly commented on "the good humour of Americans" and wished English laborers were as happy. Other Euro-

peans linked good humor to egalitarianism and saw it variously as admirable or rude.

In the 19th century, Victorian women's culture redefined the home as a cheer-filled refuge from the world. Most strong emotions lauded

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in centuries past—romantic love, "healthy" fear, grief, motherly love, and so forth—came to be seen in the early 20th century as signs of immaturity. Individualism dictated cheerfulness as the most beneficial emotion, since it served the self, and the cheerfulness ethic insinuated itself into the workplace. By the

1920s, many companies—often helmed by managers raised in homes steeped in Victorian women's culture—were attempting to engineer a cheerful, anger-free, and thus more productive workplace. Popular writers spread cheerfulness as the gold standard through self-help books such as *A Little Book of Smiles and Joy and Sunshine* (1911) and *Enjoy Living* (1939). Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936), which praised the ever-smiling salesman, sold like hotcakes.

Today, want ads even for paralegal assistants and mortgage originators stipulate a cheerful personality, and advertisers insist that their products will make consumers smile. But all this cheerfulness has its price. Depression is much more prevalent in the West than it is elsewhere, Kotchemidova notes. Perhaps more people are diagnosed as depressed because cheerfulness is deemed the

## EXCERPT

### Scoundrels and Scholars

*In the academic world . . . in which superior virtue is routinely assumed, it appears that cheating is so endemic that it is ignored, or when exposed is treated with laxity, though here, too, whatever punishments are meted out tend to be harsher for more junior members of the hierarchy, and certainly more for students than faculty. Tenure committees are inured to the cooked resumé, the fudged attribution, the casual appropriation of the intellectual work of others; among faculty only the most exorbitant lapses tend to attract investigation or censure, and punishment seldom involves leaving the academy. Most offenders,*

*taking advantage of the ever-convenient threat of litigation, manage to negotiate a whitewash of some variety that enables them to move on unscathed to the next institution. The whole effort to detect and eliminate faculty wrongdoing is indeed so embarrassing, time-consuming, and often inconclusive that the American Historical Association decided, in 2003, to cease accepting complaints of professional misconduct and to stop conducting the formal adjudication of such cases. The Association justified its step by announcing that its past efforts "have not had sufficient impact either on the individuals involved in cases of misconduct, or on the profession as a whole, or on the wider public."*

—A. J. SHERMAN, author of *Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine, 1918–1948* (1997), in *New England Review* (Number 3, 2005)

norm; but it could also be that people experience greater mental distress because they work so hard to manage their emotions. “Emotion labor”—nowhere more evident than on the faces of flight attendants—“takes its toll on the individual and often results in burnout, drug use, or alcoholism.” In 2003, Delta Airlines, for instance, spent \$9 million on antidepressants for employees and their dependents.

## SOCIETY

## Murder Metropolis

**THE SOURCE:** “Homicide in Los Angeles, 1827–2002” by Eric H. Monkkonon, in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Autumn 2005.

AS ANY FILM NOIR BUFF CAN attest, Los Angeles has a long, sordid history of murder. From its origins as a Spanish mission to the present day, Los Angeles’s homicide rate has placed it at or near the top of the list of most dangerous cities during almost every time period. Gruesome killings, such as the notorious “Black Dahlia” murder of Elizabeth Short in 1947, and celebrity murders, such as that of O. J. Simpson’s ex-wife, Nicole Simpson, in 1994, or of Robert Blake’s wife, Bonny Lee Bakley, in 2001, garner lurid media coverage and help reinforce Los Angeles’s reputation as a place where life comes cheap. There’s a tradition of violence that authorities may find difficult to break, writes Eric H. Monkkonon, a historian at the University of California, Los Angeles.

In its earliest days, when Los Angeles was still part of Mexico, the population was small, and it took only

two or three murders to give the settlement an inflated per capita homicide rate. Yet by the start of the 20th century, when Los Angeles had been a U.S. city for more than 50 years, its murder rate averaged higher than 11 per 100,000, “a figure about 1.5 times that of the whole United States and three times more than that of New York City.”

Monkkonon notes that there are some mysterious anomalies. What, for instance, accounts for the sharp decline in the homicide rate during the Depression (ironically, the period most often depicted in gritty novels such as 1939’s *The Big Sleep*)? Or for a similar decline in the 15 years after World War II? Stricter law enforcement and economic optimism are among the expert guesses.

It’s “astounding,” says Monkkonon, that in years prior to 1967 (when the data still indicated victims’ birthplaces), 67 percent of

Gruesome killings and celebrity murders help reinforce Los Angeles’s reputation as a place where life comes cheap.

those murdered were not from Los Angeles, which lends support to the notion that rootlessness and anomie explain some of the city’s peculiarity. Many of the killers also came from out of town, including Missouri’s William Edward Hickman, the abductor and murderer of 11-year-old Marian Parker in 1927, and Colorado’s Harvey M. Glatman, the 1950s serial murderer known as the Lonely Hearts Killer.

Monkkonon cites the high percentage of homicides ruled “justifiable” by the authorities (seven percent, or 3,345 deaths during the years he studied) as evidence that an



Movies such as *The Big Sleep*, with Humphrey Bogart, depicted Los Angeles as a city rife with violence. But during the Depression, when the novel was set, L.A. saw a rare dip in homicides.