Public Administrative Communication

What is Administrative Communication and Why is it Important for Governing

*According to a Presidential panel, Halliburton Co. knew weeks before the Macondo oil rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico that cement Halliburton used to seal the well-bottom failed to pass tests for stability. Halliburton failed to communicate all these results to BP or Transocean, the rig operator. That explosion cost eleven lives, contaminated miles of coastline, endangered animal and plant life, and damaged the livelihood of thousands of people. The presidential panel also criticized President Obama’s administration for misrepresenting the extent of the oil spill, limiting government response to cleanup.

“The [Presidential panel] report did not pin the accident on any one of these [technical] mistakes, but rather attributed it to a broader breakdown of communication and a lack of a culture of safety at the companies involved” (Broder 2011). The panel noted that in both the Deepwater Horizon explosion and 9-11 attacks compartmentalization and hoarding of information contributed to the disasters.

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*Increasing evidence exists that unclosed communication loops contributed to failure to prevent the 9-11 attacks in the United States and the 2008 attack in Mumbai, India. In both cases information gleaned by or even volunteered to one agency failed to be communicated to others who needed to act. With 9-11, communication gaps among immigration, law enforcement, and other agencies made it harder to “connect the dots” to prevent an attack. Less than a year before terrorists killed at least 163 people in Mumbai, India, a young Moroccan woman went to American authorities in Pakistan to warn them that she believed her husband, David C. Headley, was plotting an attack. That information was never relayed to Indian authorities.

*Miscommunication before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 boggled the collective minds of much of the world and has been the subject of books and even more articles, some of which are discussed in this essay. Problems of communication systems inoperability and lack of interoperability, miscommunication among organizations and levels of government, and news media distortions all hindered preparation, response and recovery efforts.

*Presidential candidate Barack Obama earned praise for his persuasive oratory and cool presence under fire. Underscoring differences between electoral/political communication and administrative communication, President Barack Obama’s administration’s failure to communicate effectively its accomplishments during the first two year has been credited by many as one of the principal reasons for diminished support for his policy agenda and substantial party losses in Congress. President Obama has received criticism—even from people who agree with his policies—for failing to communicate his health reform law, economic stimulus package, financial reforms, and, more recently, military actions in Libya to Congress and the American public (Leubsdorf 2011).

*Public release of thousands of government documents by WikiLeaks from 2006 onward laid bare official communication from governments around the world and prompted actions and reactions by these governments
and public officials mentioned. Implications of the WikiLeaks practice of spreading secret documents through web technology have yet to be fully understood.

*Social/media networking technologies have played instrumental roles in deposing the long-powerful Egyptian president Hosni Mubarek and on-going struggles to replace other entrenched regimes in North Africa and the Middle East.

These are just some of the many events where communication plays a key role. Communication is a crucial component in public administration but certainly not the only one. This essay has a two-fold purpose. 1. Since it has not been done before, to review *Public Administration Review* coverage of administrative communication since PAR’s inception and 2. To identify communication issues of enduring relevance to scholars and practitioners. To do this requires addressing what is meant by communication and developing a framework for analysis.

In his classic work *Communication in Management: The Theory and Practice of “Administrative Communication*, Charles Redfield, (1953, 1958), drawing from Shannon and Weaver’s (1949) mathematical theory of communication, classically defines communication as “the process of transferring a selected bit of information (a message) from an information source to a destination” (1958: 3). Redfield’s definition is cited because it sheds light on his formulation of scope, not because this is the definitive definition of communication. In fact, attempts to
define communication have been numerous and frustrating (Dance, 1970; Klauss and Bass, 1982), partly due to the
different approaches taken to studying communication (Fisher, 1978; Krone, Jablin and Putnam, 1987). The
counsel of Infante, Rancer and Womack, (1990: 7) makes sense to me. “The Fact that we have no universally
accepted definition of communication is not a debilitating problem. Such as state of affairs is to be expected, given
our current level of understanding. What is important is that we continue studying communication and learning as
much as we can about this very significant set of human behaviors. The more we learn, the more precisely we are
able to define communication. Studying a phenomenon allows us to define it. It is not true that that to study
something we must be able to define it.” Public administrative communication in the context of this essay
involves internal or external public administrative agency communication (Garnett 1997a). This domain
includes administrative agency reporting, interagency or intergovernmental interaction, efforts to gauge agency
stakeholder opinions, and the like. Excluded are topics such as election campaign rhetoric, legislative debate,
and other issues largely beyond the sphere of the administrative functions of governments. Such topics are
more commonly identified with political communication, a field with a burgeoning scholarship of its own (e.g.,
Davis 2010; Denton 2008; Nimmo and Sanders 1981). Of course overlaps exist such as the interest in agenda
setting and agency information campaigns to influence public policy and citizen behavior about smoking, forest
fire prevention, nutrition, and other issues.

Evolution of Coverage by Public Administration Review

Instead of attempting a general, historical coverage of administrative communication (Garnett 1997b), this
article explores how Public Administration Review has covered this topic since its inception covering these
topics:
1. Internal Agency Communication.
2. Communication Techniques and Skills.
3. Interorganizational Communication.
5. Public Information
6. Citizen Participation
7. Information/Communications Technology
8. Crisis Communication
9. Conveying Meaning

Some soul-searching occurred over choosing these emphases to cover in \textit{PAR}. These topics are wide-ranging and that presented challenges in drafting this essay. They are hardly, however, the only communication emphases covered by \textit{PAR} over the years but they appear to be the major thrusts. In addition, communication topics often overlap and interact. Citizen participation often occurs through communications technology, for example, and may have the purpose of decision-making. Additionally, a number of \textit{PAR} articles span emphases so are covered in more than one topic. My selection of topics/emphases is therefore arbitrary. Public information and citizen participation could have been combined, for example, but addressing them separately allows us to see different nuances.

Deciding whether an article addressed communication sufficiently for attention here also proved a challenge. Some articles never mention “communication” as such but focus on information, reporting, feedback or other key aspects of communication so are included here. In fact, other terms are sometimes used instead of communication. Early articles talk about reporting a la POSDCORB when a broader sense of communication is
implied. This essay and references therefore includes articles that address communication issues directly or indirectly without even using that term. Computer searches used unearthed other terms including reporting, dialogue, talking, writing, meetings, and other aspects of communicating. Some restrictiveness was necessary, however. Virtually all PAR articles involve communication in some form whether examining policy debates over immigration or relating what decision makers tell each other. In most of such articles, communication gets no self-conscious attention or attention is so minimal as to be incidental. These articles I excluded. Decisions about which articles to include were obviously judgment calls and I welcome being corrected. Our profession would be better served with more rather than less attention to this important administrative function.

The following communication emphases are discussed roughly in the chronological order they received emphasis in PAR. This does not mean that all coverage of internal organization communication appeared before the other topics were addressed. Much chronological overlap occurs as well as conceptual overlap. It does mean that these emphases surfaced in some significant way in this order, outliers notwithstanding.

1. Internal Organizational Communication

The earliest attention to public administrative communication from PAR and other sources focused primarily on internal organizational communication. Some of the early contributors to PAR were practitioners focused on internal, government agency communication. In “Reporting: a two-way street,” Beyle (1939) anticipated later discussions about the need for both top-down and bottom-up reporting and feedback that was echoed by later scholars (Downs 1967; Garnett 1992; Garnett, Marlowe and Pandey 2008; Kaufman 1973). Corson (1944) provides a precocious and perceptive treatment of the overall role of administrative communication “(1) to
convey instructions and policy decisions down the line of authority, (2) to report to the administrator the reports, suggestions, and experiences of employees at each vantage point of operating experience, and (3) to create a common understanding of group purpose” (1944, 7). Corson gives direct attention to a range of communication issues including distortion, indoctrination, media utilization and lives up to his aim to show “a picture of the communication system or lack of system of a relatively typical government unit” (1944, 11). Corson’s approach is descriptive rather than prescriptive as taken by a number of the early PAR articles on communication. This is one of the rare early articles that takes a more systemic, holistic approach to communication although Corson (1944, 7) gives the caveat that “Communication is considered here only as it relates to the internal administration of an organization and not as it concerns the agency’s relations with its clientele, the Congress, or the general public.” Corson is thus consistent with the classical, administrative orthodoxy of that time (Gulick and Urwick 1937) that focuses predominantly on formal, internal communication and other aspects of administration (Garnett 1997b). Roberts et al. (1974, 505) contend that the orthodoxists “advocated limited and specific communication channels for the purpose of coordinating specialized parts of organizations in which there are detailed roles, prescriptions, and leadership styles…[and] formal communication channels in organization with efficiency as the primary independent variable.”

While Beyle and especially Corson maintained the orthodox emphasis on internal administration, they gave more explicit attention and value to communication than did the bulk of orthodox writing. Luther Gulick, while arguably the most influential of the reformer orthodoxists and a savvy administrator, based on his government experience, paid virtually no attention to communication in his classic 1937 “The Science of Administration” and little attention thereafter. In a more recent PAR article Gulick (1990, 602) does acknowledge a supportive role for communication when he wrote, “The central tasks of public administration
arc: More and better planning at every decision level, making full use of the new memory, computation, and communication tools…”

While internal agency communication received PAR attention in the 1940’s accompanying the emphasis on administrative orthodoxy, articles on the topic didn’t appear again until the 1960’s. Makielski (1967) includes having a common language as a precondition for administrative success. He goes on to elaborate that a common language involves is part of an effective communication system. Indeed Makielski (1967, 150) concludes that, “One way of describing and organization is as a system of orderly communication, both formal and informal.” Even though Makielski’s thrust is on mainstream organization and administration, he predates a later wave of interest in communication as language and symbols discussed below. While no longer the dominant focus, internal agency communication has also received recent PAR attention from Pandey and Garnett (2006) and Garnett, Marlowe and Pandey (2008). Both of these articles address internal communication but also interpersonal and external communication as well. These works are discussed in the section on Communication in Management and Policy Processes.

2. Communication Techniques and Skills

Another early PAR emphasis on communication came through government practitioners who were understandably interested in tools and skills for improving government performance. This genre predictably included “how to” articles on such “nuts and bolts” topics as “Selecting a medium for written instructions” (Harris 1940) or “Government questionnaires and the Federal reports act of 1942 (Stringham 1943). Even some apparently broader pieces such as “The technique of administrative reporting” (Latham 1943) focused on how to organize, staff, and operate history/archival units within government. These titles give the flavor of
some of the earliest PAR coverage of administrative communication. Other practitioner-written and practitioner-focused articles centered on committee effectiveness (Hubbell 1946). PAR attention to communication skills and techniques has continued beyond its first decade, reported by practitioners, academics and “pracademics.” The primary foci have been instruction on committees and meetings, writing, and interpersonal skills.

Committee and Meeting Skills. Drawing from experience with war-time committees, Hubbell (1946) imparted advice on improving committee effectiveness. Some of his prescriptions include choosing a secretary with generalist, policy knowledge who can craft an agenda and follow-up on committee decisions; discouraging formal presentations and encouraging discussion and decisions; and issuing timely, standardized minutes to participants and those who needed to act on committee decisions. Nicholson (1971) contributed another how-to article on committees and meetings, in part to rectify what he saw as a decline in emphasis on communication. In his words, “Even though its popularity as a seminar and lecture topic has recently declined on conference agenda, the problem of communication among key administrators has neither been resolved nor diminished” (1971, 668). Nicolson’s answer for improving meetings is to hold stand-up meetings. Stand-up meetings are held without a conference table, allow participants to move about informally, encourage short interactive responses rather than long presentations, and, claims Nicholson, avoid many of the communication barriers that hinder more formal meetings. Instead of focusing on meeting skills for on going in house committees or staff meetings, Bryson and Anderson (2000) address meeting skills that larger groups of stakeholders can use to address organizational or community issues. Where Hubbell’s and Nicholson’s treatments were primarily prescriptive Bryson and Anderson take a more descriptive, analytical approach. They systematically compare seven different Large Group Interactive Methods (Real Time Strategic Change, the Search Conference, Future
Search, Strategic Options Development Analysis, Strategic Choice, Technology of Participation, and Open Space Technology), noting the strengths and weaknesses of each. These seven are all structured processes used by planners, managers, or community organizers to build commitment for policies or actions, broadly share information, bring together in one place most major stakeholders, identify disagreement and address it, and build coalitions for action among other aims. Bryson and Anderson found that different Large Group Interactive Methods are more useful depending on the degree of mission, vision, and goal clarity in a situation. Yet a different form of meeting—public hearings, receive attention from Baker, Addams, and Davis (2005). They surveyed 500 city managers to identify the factors contributing most to the success or failure of public hearings. Quantitative and qualitative analysis identified ten practices resulting in more successful public hearings.

Good planning (clear goals, good timing, accessible location, prepared officials, reports, procedures, and agenda); effective notification; high public interest in topic/limited public interest in topic; effective prehearing education (including refuting false information); good meeting conductor, facilitator; clear, complete presentation at beginning of the hearing with visual aids, graphics, handout materials; adequate opportunity for public input; open, receptive attitude of city officials; open-minded citizens; and effective action and follow up on citizens’ input. (Baker, Addams, and Davis, 2005, from Table 1, 492).

These articles focused primarily on committee tasks and meeting preparation, conduct, and follow-up. They did not emphasize interpersonal or group communication skills, the focus of another set of PAR articles. **Interpersonal Skills.** Reflecting some of the emphasis on human behavior and organization development that flourished in the 1960s and has continued, interpersonal communication skills has received PAR attention in
several different contexts. Vogel (1968) anticipated the later emphasis on internal and external networks by advocating that administrators use a socio-metric technique to assess informal communication patterns in an organization that “play an important role in determining the functional and/or dysfunctional characteristics of bureaucracies” (1968, 431). This assessment was to be done by find responses to key questions: “1. To whom do you turn for advice or information about your job? 2. To whom do you give advice or information about his job? 3. From whom do you take orders and 4. To whom do you give orders?” (1968, 31). Vogel provides step-by-step instruction on conducting this informal communication analysis, concluding that administrators benefit from both the product that sheds light on informal patterns and also the process of sensitizing administrators who are involved in the analysis. While Vogel’s piece describes a research process rather than reports research results, it remains one of the few PAR articles addressing communication research.

Stivers (1994) addresses the communication skill of listening from an different perspective. She links broad concerns for government accountability and responsiveness with a need for administrators to listen better. Her main argument is “Because it promotes openness, respect for difference, and reciprocity, the practice of skillful listening can help administrators evolve toward a form of responsiveness that supports both democratic accountability and administrative effectiveness” (367). Stivers touches on the qualities of “skillful listening” (366) that is receptive, minimizes ego, waits for the speaker to finish, among other qualities. As did Stivers, Jensen (2007) addressed large administrative issues through the perspective of communication skills. Jensen argued that considerable attention had been devoted to public sector decision making but not enough attention paid to the interpersonal influence tactics used to sway decisions in groups. Jensen used a questionnaire to assess influence tactics used in different contexts. He found that rational and inspirational tactics were most commonly used but that for decision making about vision and future possibilities inspirational and coalition
influence tactics were more effective. For concrete, current decisions, rational, inspirational, and consultative tactics he found more effective.

Berman and West (2008) approached interpersonal communication by assessing Emotional Intelligence by surveying 212 city managers or chief administrative officers in cities over 50,000 population. They defined Emotional Intelligence (EI) as the capability for recognizing one’s own behavior and that of others and making effective use of that knowledge. In their research Berman and West assessed the influence of four strategies—recruitment and selection; feedback, modeling and mentoring; training; and use of codes and standards—on four components of EI (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) and a composite measure. Berman and West found that 24 percent of the jurisdictions make high use of strategies to improve Emotional Intelligence, 54 percent made moderate use and 22 percent low use. The EI strategy of modeling/mentoring/feedback has the greatest impact on EI level while recruitment; selection and training; and codes and standards and indirect effect

The more communication-oriented strategy utilizing feedback was found to be the most effective EI strategy.

Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010) also explore EI via empirical analysis, surveying employees in two Israeli cities. Even though they never mention the word, communication is implicit in terms of “identifying emotions in faces, voices, postures, and other content during public management activities” (nonverbal communication) and understanding and managing those emotions (75). They found that higher EI related significantly to job satisfaction while lower EI related to burnout, feeling of quitting, and negligent behavior. In other words, EI with its heavy dose of affective communication relates to public sector performance.

Writing Skills. Not much has appeared in PAR about writing instruction or skills. Consistent with the pre-WWII emphasis on formal bureaucracy and formal communication, Harris (1940) focused on the criteria to
consider when selecting the proper medium (letter, circular letter, or revisable manual) for conveying instructions, rules, and regulations. Harris gives little attention to writing quality but does advocate clear paragraphs and use of headings to identify content. Other attention to writing comes from Lidman and Somers (2005) who address writing quality issues in their top ten list of instructions for policy analysts. According to them (628), “The compleat policy analyst will master clear, concise prose.” This involves speaking with one voice even if multiple authors contribute, using understandable writing, telling a compelling story, and using a “punchy,” self-contained executive summary (631). There has been little writing about writing in PAR and in other public policy and administration journals. This stands in contrast to business management where instruction on writing is covered in textbooks on business communication, journal articles, and more courses than in public administration. Notable exceptions include David Ewing’s masterful Writing for Result in Business, Government and the Professions, and Diane Schmidt’s Writing in Political Science. Despite some emphasis on pedagogy, articles in PAR would make a lean primer on improving communication skills.

3. Interorganizational Communication.

The term interorganizational communication to denote communication across organizations—whether public, private, or nonprofit—is used in business management and the communication sciences more than in public administrative communication. Within public administration, these issues tend to cluster around the topics of federalism, intergovernmental relations, and, more recently, networks. Since Wright, Stenberg and Cho have contributed a commendable article on American Federalism, Intergovernmental Relations, and Intergovernmental Management for the PAR Foundations Series, I will focus selectively on articles on these topics that focused directly on communication. Wright, Stenberg, and Cho (PAR Foundations Series, 24)
concluded that, “The following noteworthy oversights in PAR coverage of FED, IGR, and IGM are worth noting. They are: (1) state and local institutional capacity, (2) horizontal interjurisdictional cooperation, (3) regionalism, (4) functional (programmatic) topics, and (5) intergovernmental implementation issues.” Since communication plays a vital role in all of these areas, it is no wonder that the role of communication in IGR and federalism has received less attention in PAR. Some of the most direct and probing PAR attention to interorganizational and intergovernmental communication comes in crisis and emergency communication, a topic covered later in this article.

Some PAR articles have focused on interorganizational and intergovernmental communication. An early PAR piece by Dobbs (1944) preceded by several decades the later interest in regionalism and interorganizational communication by relating the experience of interagency communication among US civilian and military agencies in New England. The substantial expansion of federal government apparatus and activity during the war and the newness of regional cooperation among federal agencies necessitated improved efforts at interagency communication, particularly at regional levels where differences in jurisdiction and authority often existed. Dobbs relates how a series of meetings and relationships were established so agency administrators could get information from each other instead of reading about it in the newspapers. The heads of military and civilian agencies in the region were required to attend these monthly luncheon meetings that had the effect of improving communication and cooperation among regional agencies. Dobbs reports tangible results from these meetings, including improved inventory control and coordinator labor policies.
Chetkow (1968) provides an early attempt to apply quantification to interorganizational communication. He studied how community organizations communicated with the Community Service Council of Indianapolis, finding that what he termed *direct* communication (face to face intervention to influence a decision at the point of decision) and *indirect* communication (studies, letter, phone calls made to the target Council but not at the time of decision) were used about equally during the period studied and also were linked with the nonprofit organization’s role. Nonprofit agencies playing an intervening role that attempts to enact policies and decisions were more likely to communicate directly than were organizations performing more of a guide role. Even though analysis is limited to actual counts of utilization, this still is useful since it directly and substantially focuses on communication and applies analysis. Heimovics, Herman, and Coughlin (1993) found that nonprofit organization leaders using multiple leadership frames were rated more effective than those using a single perspective and those emphasizing a political perspective were generally more effective than the comparison group. Communication behaviors were part of each of the four frames/perspectives. Among other behaviors, the structural perspective involves clarifying mission and direction, the human resources frame includes collaboration, building teams and keeping open communication, the political frame involves influencing policy decisions, stakeholders, and coalitions, and the symbolic frame includes articulating vision and influencing culture. While internal communication is more typically the focus of the structural and human resources frames with external communication predominating in the political frame, the nonprofit leaders tended to emphasize external successes in all frames. The Chetkow and Heimovics, Herman, and Coughlin articles are among the few PAR pieces to address communication in nonprofit organizations. Also of interest is the foresighted focus of these two articles on interorganizational communication rather than internal organizational communication that had been the dominant prior focus on nonprofits. Kettl (2000) takes the
discussion to the international arena, looking at interorganizational and intergovernmental relations in the globalization context. His focus lies predominantly on emerging communications/information technologies that have changed the way governments relate and have increased the influence of nonprofit/nongovernmental organizations.

Attention to the construct of networks within PAR also addresses interorganizational communication, but in different ways. While not the first voice on the issue, O’Toole (1997) raised the call for more systematic and probing scholarly attention to networks, concluding that networks until then were important but neglected and misunderstood. O’Toole’s article, while important in promoting the case for network scholarship, omits attention to the roles of communication in knowledge, policy, or service networks. Also concerned with knowledge networks, Weber and Khademian explore how these networks can solve wicked problems. They address the role of communication in this process, concluding that

The fundamental challenges posed by wicked problems place critical emphasis on the tasks of knowledge transmission and integration. Knowledge transmission tasks are communication issues that are grounded in social and political relationships involving heterogeneous actors with diverse interests and goals.

In their comparison of different intellectual traditions (sociological, political science and public management) on networks, Berry et al. (2004) do address communication in several ways. By showing the contribution of the different streams of network scholarship, they aimed to improve communication among those streams. They also address how different streams have looked at the role of communication. In the policy/political science tradition, how do communication networks diffuse information within policy networks and what has been the
impact of that communication on policies. Berry et al. also caution the need for examining the “darksides” of networks as well as the benefits that include the possibility of groupthink and the costs of providing necessary network communication.

Attention to needed communications technology within and among networks gets attention from several fronts. Keast, Mandell, Brown, and Woolcock (2004) briefly address the technology issue and also address communication barriers and building relationships. Agranoff (2006) focuses more on information technology than other aspects of communication but does emphasize the crucial role of face-to-face communication for managing knowledge in networks. Communication tools and channels also receives some PAR attention (Dawes, Cresswell and Pardo 2009).

The connection between higher levels of accountability for service cooperative networks and “strong communication” has also been supported in PAR (Page 2004, 601). Townsend (2004) reported on a pilot program to establish Criminal Justice Treatment Networks, finding that use of case management process, management information systems, and other efforts within these networks improved communication between criminal justice officials and treatment providers.

While also focusing on criminal justice issues, Caldwell and Dorling (1995) use the concept of networking as professional networking rather than the interrelationships within networks of organizations. They examine the contact between criminal justice practitioners and academics in that field, finding need for greater communication and trust between them, and offering recommendations to accomplish that.

PAR authors tend to use the term collaboration in different ways. One set of literature focuses interorganizational collaboration within service delivery or other kinds of networks. That focus is addressed in
this section. The other principal focus on collaboration, addressed in the section on citizen participation, is on citizen collaboration with government as a form of overall participation.


Some of PAR’s attention to communication has come, understandably, in its coverage of central administrative functions—planning, implementation, decision making, monitoring, and the communication function itself.

Planning. Communication, while the term was never mentioned, did feature in a model action planning process used by the Federal Drug Administration that incorporated receiving bottom up and external “advice” on planning goals and effectively written documentation of the planning process (Young and Norris 1988). In an earlier, empirical study, Chetkow (1968) assessed whether the type of communication channel community social service agencies used made a difference in getting plans adopted. He found that communication to decision makers tended to be more direct via meetings, testimony, and written documents. Written communication was used most for conveying information while oral communication in the form of meetings and phone calls was used more for influencing policy.

Implementation. That communication is explicit in effective implementation is captured by some PAR articles including Grizzle and Pettijohn (2002) who include clear, consistent communication as a key factor for implementation. On the interface between legislated policy and implemented policy, Lerner and Wanat 1983) conclude that mismatches between perceived “fuzzy” and “crisp” policy cause problems and opportunities for implementation. For bureaucracies, trying to implement vague, fuzzy policies can produce diffused results but
can also provide more discretion for experimentation and innovation. In terms of the implementer-client interface, implementation shortcomings with US national employment policy were attributed significantly to communication blocks of mistrust and lack of understanding between federal agencies and minority groups (Reeves 1970). Examining an internal implementation process, Viteritti and Carponcy (1981) trace development of a new reporting system for the New York City Public School System, noting the use of meetings, reports, briefings, team collaboration, and other forms of communication between the Chancellor and his staff and other units with the school system to get the reporting system implemented. On the broader, national front, a successful communication effort is seen as instrumental to implementing presidential policy (Breul and Kamensky 2008; Barnes 2009) although neither piece devotes much attention to the specifics of how this is done. Overall, the role of communication in the implementation process has received attention but is not viewed as centrally to implementation as by Nakamura and Smallwood ((1980) and Goggin, et al (1990) who develop a cybernetic, communication model of implementation.

**Decision-Making.** PAR attention to decision making has explored communication from different perspectives: as a component in decision processes (deHaven-Smith and Jenne 2006; Jensen 2007) and as an outcome of decision making (Bozeman and Pandey 2004; Melkers and Willoughby 2005). Using a management by inquiry approach that structures discourse improves communicative action and accountability and has implications for more than police-public safety operations where it has been used most (deHaven-Smith and Jenne 2006). Jensen (2007) compared different influence tactics (rational argument, consultation, exchange, ingratiation, inspiring appeals, and coalition (group) persuasion) and found the choice of tactic affects decision outcomes. Looking at decision making over budget cuts and information technology development, Bozeman and Pandey
(2004) found that the content of decisions affects the quality of information utilized in decision-making processes. Melkers and Willoughby (2005) also treated communication as a dependent variable, examining the effects of performance management systems on a range of issues, including communication. They found use of performance management affected communication quality within local governments and with their publics.

Leadership and Change. Here again, communication is seen from varying perspectives. Looking at characteristics of leaders, Newman, Guy and Mastricci (2009, 16) approach the emotional side of leadership in term of “emotional labor,” effort on the part of individuals that conveys emotion in the form of compassion, awareness, adaptability, genuine listening and other forms, qualities often missing in discussions of leadership. In one aspect of leadership in US federal agencies, Choi and Rainey (2010, 117) found effective communication helped “increase the positive effects of racial diversity on organizational performance” and facilitated the effects of diversity management programs. More broadly, the variable communication links with followers’ perceptions of satisfaction for leadership in federal agencies (Trottier, Van Wart and Wang 2008).

Communication is involved in different stages of the change process from conveying the need for change (Fernandez and Rainey 2006; Rainey and Thompson 2006) to being a critical factor in the change organizational change process and a positive outcome of such a process (Stewart and Kringas 2003).

Communication. Until recently, the only PAR piece focusing predominantly on government’s communication function was Corson’s (1944) insightful discussion of internal agency communication. After 2000 several articles have taken a communication focus. In a large-scale empirical study of state health and human service agencies, Pandey and Garnett (2006) tested the influence of goal clarity, organizational culture, and red tape on
internal, external, and interpersonal communication performance. They found that goal clarity and all three types of organizational culture (rational, developmental, and group cultures) related significantly and positively to internal communication performance, as did red tape. While they assumed restrictions that red tape typically brings would reduce internal communication performance, agencies were found to work harder on internal communication to overcome the red tape imposed on them. Garnett, Marlowe, and Pandey (2008) focused on the influences that different types and levels of communication have on organizational performance and on communication’s role in mediating or moderating the effects of organizational culture on overall organizational performance. They found that specific forms of communication (downward communication orientated to task, feedback, and upward communication) have positive effects on perceived organizational performance in mission-oriented organizations but potentially negative effects on performance in rule-oriented cultures.

Given the intrinsic connection of communication with central management functions of planning, decision making, and leading and managing change, it is surprising that communication gets only this much PAR coverage on these topics. Reasons for this under-coverage are explored later in this essay.

5. Public Information

For most of government’s history in the United States and other countries, government communication has focused predominantly on conveying information to publics. Governments have transmitted information in different ways—official reports, news accounts via the print and electronic media, film, drama, and other means. Reporting has been a staple form of government communication. Drawing from a previous study, Lee (2006) examines the government reporting function from both normative and descriptive/empirical contexts.
For decades another primary channel for getting government information to publics came through the press—print media. Dunn (1968) and Sigal (1973) assess the ways public officials transmit information to the press and provide guidance and tactics for working effectively with the press.

Much of public information has come in the form of publicizing and promoting government programs and initiatives. In the broadest PAR treatment of the subject, Yarwood and Enis (1982) trace the US federal government’s public information function from 1792 through the 1970’s, noting major publicity campaigns increased by the New Deal and World War II, sorting through terminology differences surrounding the public-information/public affairs/public relations function, tracing the increase in spending, and examining the effects of efforts to influence the public on democratic governance. They note how federal publicity campaigns have gone beyond reliance on the press but have included film, music, art, symbols, and other media.

PAR coverage of public information extends to dealing with cynical citizens (Berman 1997) and effects of bureaucracy bashing on public servants (Garrett, Thurber, Fristschler, and Rosenbloom 2006). Friedman (1956) gives an early PAR view of legal and administrative aspects of information disclosure while Roberts (2000) provides a more recent assessment of changes in Freedom of Information policy in Canada.

6. Citizen Participation

Since an article expressly about citizen participation is included in the Foundations of Public Administration series, again I will focus only on PAR articles on participation that have direct, significant coverage of
communication. Focus on communication within PAR coverage of participation tends to be on communicating within the participation process and the effect of communication on the efficacy or value of participation.

Participation Process. It is no surprise that the use of advisory boards and committees received the first PAR attention on participation since they were among the first approaches used. Brown (1955; 1972) notes uses of advisory boards to accomplish several communication functions—to provide advice, serve as a listening post, marshal support, and interpret government administrative measures to the public. He cautions, however, about potential dangers of advisory boards—taking up too much administrative time, meddling in administrative matters, be rubber-stamps and “be too strong a break on progressive administration” (Brown 1955, 200). This last “danger” clearly comes from a time and mindset different from today. Another mechanism for citizen participation—public hearings—is addressed by Baker, Addams and Davis (2005) while Kosar’s (2008) interview reveals aspects of the White House communication, public information “machine.”

In a more general and contemporary treatment of participation, Eagle and Cowherd (2006) discuss the role of communication in clarifying expectations for citizen participation and in coordinating participation efforts. Agranoff (2006) provides lessons for governments working with collaborative networks of non-government organizations. Bryer (2009) recognizes the role communication plays in influencing the perception of government managers and citizens in collaborative processes, maintaining ongoing collaborative relationships, building trust between citizens and officials, and exchanging needed information in the collaborative process.

Communication Effects on Efficacy of Citizen Participation. Halversen (2003) found empirically that the quality of public meetings had significant influence on the citizen participants’ trust in the agency (United
States Forest Service) conducting those meetings. Those meetings stressed two-way communication with citizen opportunities for discussing, questioning, and challenging. Another use of communication in collaborative processes is gathering citizen input for decision making (Ebdon and Franklin 2006; Fung 2006). Fung acknowledges the imbedded nature of communication and decision making when describing the roles communication plays in various types of participative mechanisms. He emphasizes the role of “communicative influence” in helping citizens and officials understand issues and reach agreement through briefings, mutual discussion, or other forms of communication. Ebdon and Franklin (2006) take a more cynical view noting that two-way citizen input is constructive but concluding that decisions about resource allocation are rarely swayed by citizen input. In a similar vein, Heikkila and Isset (2007) found that a sample of special districts studied in Texas generally lacked strong citizen participation about performance management, noting the tendency for one-way dissemination of information via newsletter and quarterly reports and recommending steps for improving participation based on focus group responses and Governmental Accounting and Standards Board standards. Ospino and Yaroni (2003) report a more positive experience with citizen participation. They found that communication was more frequent and addressed broader subjects as cooperation evolved from mandated institutional cooperation to individual cooperation between labor and management. Researching barriers to effective citizen participation, Yang and Callehan (2007, 256) found that “inadequate government-citizen communication” was mentioned by fifty-three percent of citizen/government official/business/interest group and other respondents. In addition, other barriers such as lack of trust (54%) and participation objectives poorly defined (51%) also integrally involve communication.

The emerging trend for eliciting citizen participation via communications technologies is addressed in the next section.
7. Information/Communication Technology

Much of the PAR coverage of information technology (IT) has no or indirect focus on communication. The focus lies in different directions, for example, IT and productivity (Ayers and Kettinger 1983), system development (Kraemer 1969; Norris and Moon 2005; Goldfinch 2007), managing IT operations (Caudle 1990), and high tech information production (Brown and Brudney 2003). Some PAR coverage of IT, however, pays more attention to communication. This coverage falls particularly on the issues of IT implications for management and E-governance.

*IT and Management.* Most PAR coverage of information/communication technology that addresses communication issues focuses on the role technology plays as a communication medium for improving information access and quality to citizens. Two articles, however, take different perspectives, looking at communication as either the dependent or intervening variable: the role of issue networks in deciding information policy (Overman and Simonton 1986) and the importance of communication in designing and implementing a management information systems (Vitteriti and Carponcy 1991). More common in approach is considering the communication effects of technology. Hackler and Saxton (2007, 474) studied IT use by nonprofit organizations for strategic management purposes. Even though they found many nonprofits with IT capability for mission-related, strategic functions, they also found “significant deficits in the strategic utilization of IT, especially in the areas of financial sustainability, strategic communications and relationship building, and collaborations and partnerships.” They concluded that the nonprofits studied used the web, for example, more as a technical and routine communication tool than as a strategic tool to achieve mission. Most nonprofits used
e-mail internal communication but its use for external communication varied widely. Menzel (1988) explores implications of internet use by governments worldwide including issues of acceptable and unacceptable use, potential government abuse, and effects on workplace communication and conditions.

**E-Governance.** Dawes (2008) traces the evolution from e-government to e-governance in local and state governments and devotes substantial attention to government-citizen communication and intergovernmental/interorganizational communication. She notes the progression from more one-way uses of communication/information technologies to disseminate information toward greater use of two-way IT communication that enables non-routine interaction with citizens. Dawes also frames future challenges for state and local IT drawn from major professional associations, noting the need to reconcile increasing access and inter-activity with the needs for enhanced privacy and security.

Norris and Moon (2005) development of e-governance at the grassroots, noting, as did Hackler and Saxton (2007) and Coursey and Norris (2008) that one-way web-based information was more common than true transactional use of this technology. The importance of transactionality or interactionality is supported by Tolbert and Mossberger (2006) who found that citizen trust in municipal government related to perceived responsiveness in communication and service. Perceptions of communication information access and transparency, while important in themselves, did not link to trust, as did actual responsiveness.

The larger dimensions of IT’s effect on democratic governance also received PAR attention. Some PAR published research shows that uses of information/communication technology can improve citizen access and capacity to participate (Kellogg and Mathur 2003; Scott 2006). Scott (2006) municipal uses of the internet
varied in content and presentation, tended to decrease the overall cost of information, and tended to increase
directed citizen involvement. Other research finds that organizations advantaged in political policy processes
continued that advantage. Rethemeyer (2007) assessed uses of the internet in two policymaking processes and
concluded that, instead of being a panacea for increasing citizen participation and democratization, uses of
communication technology tended to reinforce organizational advantages that already existed.
Kakabadse, Kakabdse and Kouzmin (2003) take the IT debate to a broader level. They start by comparing
alternative conceptions of democracy and then examine potential upsides and downsides of IT communication
on democracy, particularly on citizens, the media, corporations, and agencies. Like Rethemeyer and Bovens
and Zouridis (2002), they caution against a growing digital divide that allows greater electronic access to the
already advantaged. Kakabadse, Kakabdse and Kouzmin also perceptively observe tendencies of
communication technologies to allow separation of responsibility and accountability both for those who
influence the policy process and those who decide policy. They conclude by advocating a process for
reconciling IT and democracy, including drawing upon the experience of other nations.
Even though information technology is essentially a communication issue, most of the information technology
articles in PAR have given only indirect or implied attention to communication issues, focusing instead on
hardware, systems, development or other issues. Yet to be covered by PAR as of this writing are administrative
uses and abuses of social media, social networking technologies. This will soon change given the impact these
new technologies have for policy and administration. I address some of the issues with the newer social
networking media when discussing emerging issues later in this essay.

8. Crisis Communication
PAR coverage of crisis communication—communication occurring when managing crises or emergencies—started with Fremont Lyden’s (1974) prescient examination of how bureaucracies adapt to crisis, proceeded sporadically until 2000 and mushroomed after 2000, especially stimulated by major crises such as 9-11 and Hurricane Katrina. PAR scholarship covers different types of crisis communication: news media communication, communicating through technology, and organizational/interorganizational communication.

**News Media Communication.** PAR’s first coverage of crisis communication in a full article—Scanlon, Alldred, Farrell, and Prawzick (1985)—detailed the roles of news media in crises and how public officials need to relate to the media. While admitting that news media can cause problems for emergency management, theirs is primarily a positive view of the media role. In contrast, others, obviously influenced by media shortcomings in more recent crises, take a more critical view of new media involvement (Garnett and Kouzmin 2007). Key roles of news media during crises to provide emergency information, define the crisis, and name heroes and villains are addressed by Garnett and Kouzmin (2007) while Lewis (2000) examines news media’s ability to raise public perceptions of terrorism risk and vulnerability following the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. Media relations from the government perspective in the form of spin-doctoring is addressed by (Boin and ‘t Hart 2003).

**Communication/Information Technology.** Another strain of articles addresses issues involving communications/information technology. Boin and ‘t Hart (2003) claim that modern crises are product of modernizing forces including communication technology that link parts of the world more closely and allow them to be affected by a single crisis. Technology, therefore, can both extend the reach of crises and be used to cope with crises. Interoperability of information/communications technology gets multiple attention (Garnett...
and Kouzmin 2007; Jenkins 2006; Kapucu, Augustin and Garayev 2009). Over-reliance on information technology in managing crises is what Garnett and Kouzmin (2007) discuss as Technology Showcase, the tendency to be enamored with high-tech solutions to communicating without fully recognizing the situational, technical and human factors that limit technology’s effectiveness and detract effort from other forms of communicating. Some PAR coverage addresses the over-reliance on crisis communication technology, even after technology failures in 9-11 and Katrina (e.g., Garnett and Kouzmin 2007).

Crisis Leadership Communication. Another strain of crisis coverage deals with the role and performance of government and other leaders during crises. Boin and ‘t Hart (2003) examine popular expectations about crisis leadership and the realities as shown by crisis research. A key expectation is that leaders communicate directives from on high that responders and others follow. Reality shows more polycentric decision-making and action. Communication involved in directing preparedness and response efforts gets attention from Garnett and Kouzmin (2007) who also note that crisis leadership is difficult and often chaotic. Overreliance on the centralized, command and control system of crisis/emergency management creates communication gaps, blockages, and distortion (Boin and ‘t Hart 2003; Comfort 2007; Garnett and Kouzmin 2007; Waugh and Streib 2006). Other PAR scholarship also questions the applicability of the predominant centralized, command and control approach to handling crises but emphasizes that lack of sound communication necessary for situational awareness limits effectiveness of command systems Wise 2006). Jenkins (2006) in a response to Wise, sees crisis communication problems more as more a result of interoperability of communications systems than a structural mismatch between government bureaucratic structure and the fast-changing, unpredictable nature of crises. The relative roles and efficacies of civilian or military leadership is examined by Morris, Morris and
Jones (2007) who note communication and coordination problems also occurred with the military response to Katrina. Another key point is that leader communication should convey resolve to reform after crisis (Boin and ‘t Hart 2003) or conditions of vulnerability will continue.

Organizational/interorganizational Network Communication

Before Katrina, PAR attention to interorganizational, collaborative approaches to managing crises came from (Boin and ‘t Hart 2003), Donahue (2006), Wise (2006) who questioned the bureaucratic model as the only viable option. Interorganizational communication networks were found to be important but lacking with Hurricane Katrina for warning of risk (Comfort 2007), evacuating residents (Kiefer and Montjoy 2006), mobilizing civilian cooperative response (Garnett and Kouzmin 2007), mobilizing military response (Morris, Morris, and Jones 2007), and integrating nonprofit response (Simo and Bies 2007). Garnett and Kouzmin (2007) found what they called the Inteorganizational Networking lens on crisis communication to be among the most promising but least developed lens. They noted the networking concept had intrinsic advantages for dealing with chaotic, evolving crises but also noted current limitations of networking including potential for turf wars and stalemate and lack of knowledge about collaborative networks. This knowledge gap is beginning to close with the Katrina-spawned research cited above and more recent work of Landry (2008), Kapucu, Augustin and Garayev (2009) and Moynihan (2008). Building on Comfort’s work on crisis information processing and learning, Moynihan’s (2008) work on learning through crisis management networks promises to give the interorganizational approach more intellectual coherence and greater efficacy.

Effectiveness of Crisis Communication. Another strain of PAR coverage assessed the effectiveness of crisis communication, offering several reasons for recurring communication problems. Garnett and Kouzmin (2007)
note that over-emphasis and over-reliance on some forms of crisis communication (media relations and information technology) and under-attention to interorganizational networking limit overall communication effectiveness. Lack of training for participating in interorganizational and even interstate emergency management cooperation was found to reduce communication effectiveness (Kapucu, Augustin and Garayev 2009). The 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City, while devastating, did not communicate a heightened sense of risk among the American public who, despite media attention, did not think such terrorism applied to them (Lewis 2000). Comfort (2007) makes the case that the problem lies more with issues of cognition in deciding how to interpret and use information than with communication of that information.

PAR coverage of crisis communication—as with other topics—has tended to come in coverage of other topics rather than primary focus on communication itself. Yet, even though PAR coverage of crisis management has accumulated mass in the last decade, this field has emerged as one of the sharpest and most interesting foci of administrative communication. If Dror’s (1986) perception that learning sharpens under the crucible of crisis is right, crisis communication will continue to be one of the most promising subfields of public administrative communication.

9. Conveying Meaning

Some of the most direct PAR attention to communication comes via scholarship that explores meaning and how meaning is conveyed. In PAR that has come in different forms including language, dialogue, narrative, and fiction.
Language. Makielski (1967) includes having a common language as a precondition for effective public administration. Communication, however, is dependent on mutually accepted symbols or “signals” (150).

While focusing primarily on the preconditions of effective internal administration, Makielski’s appreciation for the importance of understood symbols is also consistent with PAR coverage on meaning, discourse, hermeneutics, and related topics. Language in the form of rhetoric draws attention from Farmer and Patterson (2003) who discuss rhetoric as a form of communication, conduct a guided tour of rhetoric’s use through the ages to the present, and propose a framework for rhetorical analysis. Patriotic rhetoric following the September 2001 attacks in the United States contributed to swinging the pendulum from concern over information technology’s intrusion on privacy to support for using that technology to combat terrorism (Nelson 2002).

Language in the form of bureaucracy bashing can also be used to affect civil servants’ perceptions of themselves, their programs, and agencies (Garrett, Thurber, Fritschler, and Rosenbloom (2006).

Meaning through Dialogue. Roberts (2002) draws distinctions among the concept of dialogue and debate, discussion and deliberation. Debate aims to win “points” and to prove the opposition wrong.

In contrast to debate, participants in a dialogue work toward mutual understanding, they listen to find strength and value in one another's position. They reexamine their own and others’ assumptions and positions. They acknowledge they can learn from each other to improve thinking on both sides. Through their co-learning, they evolve a sense of trust and a shared identity, such that transformations in views, perspectives, and actions have been known to occur (2002, 661).

Deliberation, on the other hand, is a structured, purposeful form of dialogue oriented to decision making. Roberts goes on to show how the process of dialogue can be used as a mechanism for achieving accountability, including a case study and concluding with advantages and disadvantages of using dialogue and necessary
precautions. The more open, less structured nature of the dialogue mechanism Roberts describes contrasts with deHaven-Smith and Jenne’s (2006) more structured management-by-inquiry process, although both aim to improve accountability.

**Communicating through Narratives.** Another form of communicating meaning is through narratives: stories, accounts, texts that possess common characteristics. According to Dodge, Ospino and Foldy (2005, 145), “Narratives have at least five essential characteristics: They are accounts of characters and selective events occurring over time, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. They are retrospective interpretations of sequential events from a certain point of view. They focus on human intention and action—those of the narrator and others. They are part of the process of constructing identity (the self in relation to others). They are coauthored by narrator and audience.” Narratives can come in different forms including histories, stories, interview summaries, reports, event chronologies, and others. Because of their characteristic nature, the story of narratives can capture depth, change, feelings, and nuances that survey research and even focus group or interview might miss (Dodge, Ospina and Foldy 2005). They go on to make the case that narrative inquiry has a place in public administration along with positivist, scientific method inquiry, trace its applications in the field, and apply it to the study of leadership. Balfour and Mesnaros (1994) provided an earlier, complementary articulation of the value of the hermeneutical perspective for improving research and communication and Callehan, Dubnick, and Olshfiski (2006) explore narratives embedded in the war on terror.

**Exploring Meaning through Fiction.** McCurdy (1973) demonstrates the value of using novels to explore administrative phenomena relevant to different subjects such as administration, organization theory and behavior, bureaucracy, management science, and comparative administration. McCurdy notes that fiction can communicate about administrative phenomena and add interest and life and interest to subjects can be dull.
McCurdy (1995) goes further to examine how fiction influences the adoption and implementation of public policy, particularly on issues that lack consensus such as mental health, space exploration, and bureaucratic reform. Novels, movies, poetry and other art forms capture people’s imagination and help shape their values and positions about issues in public administration. For this reason, fiction and its influence deserves more attention according to McCurdy. Fictional works like *Catch-22*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, and *Dirty Harry* certainly create vivid images. Another PAR article gives a second-hand review of commentaries on the administrative novel and adds justification for the study of novels (McDaniel 1978) while yet provides a fascinating account of the uses of humor in administrative contexts (Yarwood 1999).

PAR scholarship on conveying meaning has often bucked the mainstream thought of public administration but it has consistently articulated different ways of knowing and reality and has added refreshing perspectives to the field.

In addition to describing PAR’s coverage of the topic, Foundations essays are charged with identifying key issues. The next session addresses what I regard to be those issues.

### Significant Issues Involving Administrative Communication

1. **Scholarly attention to public administrative communication still lacks the attention it deserves.** With the exception of symposia that can be commissioned, PAR content reflects submissions of scholars and practitioners that made it through the peer review process. This finding is not an indictment of current and past
PAR editors but an observation about actual coverage. If this essay covered only those articles that had direct
and primary attention to communication, it would be a short essay indeed. About ten articles would qualify:

Corson 1944;
Chetkow 1968;
Reeves 1970;
Berman 1997;
Melkers and Willoughby 2005;
deHaven-Smith and Jenne 2006;
Lee 2006;
Pandey and Garnett 2006;
Garnett and Kouzmin 2007;
Garnett, Marlowe, and Pandey 2008;

Most of the articles discussed in this essay give indirect, brief attention to communicating in conjunction with
other topics. Some reasons for this under-attention can be addressed in the form of paradoxes, predicaments,
dilemmas, and the like. This discussion draws heavily from Garnett (1997a).

**The Progengy Predicament.** Because public administrative communication is the offspring of two parents with
identity crises, it too searches for a sense of identity. Because public administration and communication are highly
interdisciplinary and relatively new fields of inquiry, both have undergone intense soul-searching about their status
and identity. Scholars of public administration have historically attempted to differentiate and protect their field
from that of political science initially and now economics (Kouzmin, Leivesley, and Korac-Kakabadse 1996; Meier
1996). Communication scholars have traditionally been identified with the fields of journalism or speech
communication. Some scholars have attempted to identify an interdisciplinary field of communication sciences
(Berger and Chafee, 1987). Writings in both public administration (e.g., Waldo 1948; 1955, 1956 1971; Wamsley
et al. 1990; Rutgers 1998; Horton 2006) and communication (e.g., Roberts, et al. 1974; Redding 1985; Berger and
Chafee 1987; Austin, and Pinkleton 2006) have attempted to address the issue of identity crisis. Both fields of inquiry have wrestled with the issue of professionalization and professional identity and have sought to demonstrate their intellectual rigor and practical value. It is understandable that public administrative communication has suffered this double identity crisis.

**The Academic Arrogance (or Rigor-mortis—the deadly insistence upon and misperception of rigor):**

Administrative communication has been linked with nuts-and-bolts management functions and therefore not viewed as conceptually or technically rigorous or interesting. Many public administration scholars have described efforts by some political scientists, public policy scholars, and economists to devalue the study of public administration as preoccupation with administrative routine (what were often perjoratively considered “nuts-and-bolts” issues. Scholars in these other fields often claim to be exploring more conceptually interesting and more rigorous phenomena such as policy formulation and evaluation, legislative behavior, and economic market failures without fully recognizing the role communication plays in these phenomena.

Ironically, public administrative communication has suffered the same arrogance within the public administration academic community that public administration itself has suffered within the larger social science community. Academic Public Administrationists have too frequently considered communication as “soft” and mundane rather than rigorous and sophisticated as are more technical fields such as budget analysis, policy evaluation, and information systems. The realization that public managers spend far more time communicating than they do analyzing budgets, formulating policies or the like does not necessarily increase the communication’s academic salience since familiarity often does breed contempt even though “a large part (perhaps all) of an executive’s job has to do with giving and receiving communications. Managers are nerve centers in the organization’s
communication network; they receive, process, and transmit all sorts of memoranda, letters, policy statements, instructions, reports, face-to-face communications and what not. Perhaps nothing is more important to successful administration than successful communication” (Lorch 1978, 174). Public administration practitioners are more likely to value communication as a critical managerial skill than are public administration academics. Indicative of this are results from a 2007 survey (NASPAA 2007) conducted by the National Association of Public Affairs and Administration and Government Executive magazine. Seventy-seven percent of the 392 senior public executives responding assessed “communication skills” as extremely important management skills for meeting the management needs of their organization over the next five years. This percentage was exceeded only by leadership (80%) and decision making (79%) and substantially higher than the ratings for performance management (54%), budgeting and financial management (44%), policy analysis (31%), or statistical analysis (19%). Even though public administration professionals consistently voice the importance of communication knowledge and skills, courses in communication or coverage of communication in graduate and undergraduate curricula are considerably less common than are courses or coverage in budgeting and financial management, policy analysis, statistical analysis and other fields that, while important, are not consistently regarded as crucial to public management as communication. Schools of Public Affairs and Administration need to learn from business schools that treat communication far more extensively and seriously. Drawing upon effective, skilled practitioners to advise programs on curricula needs and teach key skill areas is another step toward achieving parity for communication.

The Disjointedness Dilemma. Scholarship on public administrative communication has suffered from the overall lack of cumulative scholarship in organization and management theory as a whole. In spite of some substantial treatments of public administrative communication (e.g., Simon 1947; Simon, Smithburg, and Thompson 1950;
Downs 1967; Kaufman 1973; Schachter 1983; Garnett 1992; Graber 1992; Wheeler 1994; Garnett and Kouzmin 1997; Lee 2006; Pandey and Garnett 2006; Garnett and Kouzmin 2007; Garnett, Marlowe, and Pandey 2008) and some stirring language about the importance of communication to public administrators (Lorch 1978; Gardner 1990), scholarship on this subject has lacked a critical mass and a definite trend of development. Recent emphasis since 2000 may indicate a start toward building a critical mass of scholarship.

The Amnesia Factor: the tendency for current scholars to forget some of the groundbreaking work previous to administrative communication. Though the work of Chester Barnard, Herbert Simon Philip Selznick, and others has been influential in shaping the field of public administration, the value of their contributions toward an understanding of communication tended to be overlooked or de-emphasized. Chester Barnard is typically hailed, for example, for the managerial experience he brought to scholarship and for his delineation of key executive functions. Succeeding scholars have often disregarded Barnard’s (1938, 226) injunction that “The first executive function is to develop and maintain a system of communication.” Herbert Simon (Simon 1947; Simon, Smithburg and Thompson 1950; March and Simon 1958) is appreciated for heightening attention to organizational decision making but has received insufficient recognition of the centrality communication played in his conception of decision making (Garnett 1997a). Selznick is more remembered within public administration circles for his work on the Tennessee Valley Authority and coalition-building (Selznick 1957) than his path breaking treatment (1957) of the role communication plays in building and maintaining institutions. These are just some of the more prominent examples of how selective memory has under valued the contributions some of the greats have also made to administrative communication.
The Fad Fetish: *The tendency within academe to pursue intellectual fads, to go for the “hot topics,” distracts scholarly attention from fundamental, enduring issues.* This is academe’s equivalent of the practitioner’s Siren Syndrome. Both can lure attention away from central issues, ironically in the search for fundamental solutions. Over the years, a series of management and governance reforms such as Management by Objectives, Strategic Management, Performance Management, Total Quality Management, Total Quality Improvement, Reinventing, Re-engineering, benchmarking, civism or civic community, social capital and the like have attracted major academic attention. Much of this attention has led to useful intellectual contributions. The bandwagon effect has been at work, however—in many cases attracting scholars who seek a “hot topic” in demand by practitioners, publishers, and others. Such faddism often results in scholarship that makes incremental contributions to topics flooded with interest while long-term, fundamental topics lack for interest. I am not saying that such topics or managerial approaches are worthless and that such misplaced attention should be redirected to really important topics such as administrative communication. I have researched and written on some of these other topics myself. Communication, for me, is not a panacea—the “silver bullet” that deserves total attention, even mine. I do stress, however, that topics considered in-vogue typically get more than their appropriate share of resources—time, money, pages—often at the expense of other, less trendy subjects, some of which have lasting salience. Indeed, some of the subjects mentioned above may have lasting significance, although Management by Objectives and Strategic Management have waned in impact (see, e.g., Mintzberg 1994) and the rush to TQM and reinvention has slowed in many quarters and been rejected in some. It is likely, however, that communication issues and challenges will outlive these and other reforms and, in fact, are at the root of these reforms that tend to have more rhetoric about communication (e.g., Osborne and Gaebler 1992, Cohen and Brand 1993) than they do solid attention to it (Garnett 1997b). That both direct and indirect PAR attention to communication have increased
substantially since 2000 is a sign that the logjam may be broken, that communication will join other key functions such as budgeting, planning, decision making and other administrative functions as enduring targets of attention.

2. **Trends toward more reciprocal, more comprehensive government communication will continue.**

While some government organizations may still be preoccupied with their media relations function, the trend toward more comprehensive, two-way communication functions marches continues. Governments have traditionally employed communication practices that have been unilateral or, if bilateral/reciprocal, more oriented to government’s sending messages than receiving them. (Heise 1985). This pattern fits three of Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) stages of public relations. The press agentry/publicity model was practiced to promote early celebrities such as Andrew Jackson and Buffalo Bill. Governments and businesses used this model to unabashedly and uncritically promote their self-interest with little regard for their publics’ interests or “the other side of the story.” This model is alive and well in current political campaigns and promotions of entertainment stars. At the turn of the 20th century, according to Grunig and Hunt (1984) and Grunig and Grunig (1992, 288) “…a second model of public relations, the public information model, developed as a reaction to attacks on large corporations and government agencies by muckraking journalists. Leaders of these organizations realized they needed more than the propaganda of press agents to counter the attacks on them in the media. Instead, they hired their own journalists as public relations practitioners to write ‘press handouts’ explaining their actions. Although practitioners of the public information model generally chose to write only good things about their organizations, the information they did report generally was truthful and accurate.” Both of these models, still found practiced by many governments featured one-way dissemination of information from organizations to publics, usually via news media. With usage
of behavioral and social science knowledge during and after World War I, what Grunig and Grunig (1992) call the two-way asymmetrical model began to be utilized. Information was sought as well as given to government’s publics, but the emphasis was clearly on getting publics to accept the organization’s position through the use of scientific theories that enabled persuasion, propaganda, and the “engineering of consent” (Grunig and Grunig 1992: 288). This model, what I call the public affairs model, is more proactive in outreach but still treats publics more as audiences to be convinced than partners to be involved. This model too has widespread use in governments worldwide.

These traditional models of communication that have relied on sending messages and manipulation of consent have not worked either in promoting organizational goals or promoting a sense of the public interest according to a growing body of scholarship on the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (Childers 1989), higher education (Kelly 1989), international organizations (Roper 2005; various government organizations (Heise 1985; Garnett 1992l; Liu and Horsley 2007), and a wide range of business, nonprofit, and government organizations (Grunig and Grunig 1992; Grunig 1997).

In the latter part of the 20th century, a number of governments moved to a more genuine two-way model of communication, toward what I term the Communication Model. This model embodies the notion of reciprocity and encompasses a broader range of functions including communication planning, issue management, internal as well as external communication, web and technology applications (Austin and Pinkleton 2006; Heath and Palenchar 2009). Focus lies with receiving communication from publics and stakeholders as well as sending. Public administrators need to internalize the concept that in communicating, receiving is more important than sending.
The trend toward greater reciprocity has several drivers. One, policies and practices for more transparency such as open meetings laws, sunshine laws, open records laws, and other policies will increase, forcing officials to focus on information needs of government publics and to treat publics as legitimate partners in governing. Two, publics’ active—even-aggressive—role in communication will likely expand. The popularity of virtual reality television and formats that feature public voting or other involvement attest to people wanting to participate rather than remain as spectators. Many government officials at all levels can also attest to the heightened involvement by many groups that are increasingly less willing just to leave issues to their government. This increased assertiveness will probably not come from a majority of citizens but is likely to maintain intensity. Three, recent explosions of different communication technologies and the numbers of people using these technologies increase citizen capabilities for participating in the government-public dialogue.

Communications technology has expanded geometrically. Internet use worldwide was estimated to be 655 million people in 2001 but in December 2010 projected at 1.967 billion—almost 29% of all people are earth (Timpagne 2010). User-generated content whether on YouTube, blogs, or government websites, has finally become the major wave anticipated (Dawes 2008). Much of this user-generated content comes through an expanding set of social media that started in the past decade—MySpace (2001), LinkedIn (2003), Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006) among others. Facebook alone has over 500 million users, making the “Facebook Nation” the third most populous country on earth. Not only has communications technology become more social, it has become more mobile. In 2000, Internet access via mobile smart phone was virtually nonexistent
while in 2010 57% of the adult population is estimated to have mobile access (Timpagne 2010). We live in an age where text messages, blogs, podcasts and other forms of communication permeate our lives.

Communications technologies can enable greater transparency and accountability. Newer, more portable communication technologies (A World of Connections 2010) can supplement or replace more traditional media to share information—whether capturing and sharing a cell phone photo of a gang beating, spreading opinions via blog, or spreading government secrets via WikiLeaks. As with other tools and technologies, the newest communication technologies can have constructive and destructive consequences. Information and also misinformation can spread farther and faster than ever before. Widespread leaking of government secrets can increase transparency but also create tensions within the community of nations. Photos and videos captured by mobile phones can supplement and sometimes correct official images but can also be used to distort events. Protests and riots that led to the Egyptian government’s overthrow in early 2011 showed communication technology used constructively and destructively. A Facebook page helped mobilize and plan the January 25 protest rally that started the stream of events. Mobile devices helped Egyptian citizens and others describe these events to the outside world when other media were blocked. The worldwide hacker group Anonymous used software to shut down temporarily the Ministry of Information website and the site of President Hosni Mubarek’s National Democratic Party. On the other side, the Egyptian government shut down the entire Internet within Egypt for an extended period, a feat thought impossible to accomplish. Technology was thus used by the government and protesters to communicate and to block communication.
The faster transmission time of these new technologies can be constructive such as with saving lives in an emergency response. Speed has downsides, though. Messages now are often sent, received, and responded to in shorter timeframes than before. If public administrators succumb to such quick exchanges without given an issue time for reflection and “settling,” such time-compression can lead to hasty, ill-conceived responses. In 2010, Shirley Sherrod, an official for the US Department of Agriculture was fired days after a blog showed an excerpted clip of her apparently making racial remarks. She was also condemned by the media, the White House and others. After fighting back through mainstream news appearances, Sherrod was vindicated and reinstated when it came out that the clip misrepresented her statements and she had actually helped the farmer in question. The speed and chaotic nature of the media frenzy clearly expedited this rush to judgment (Tumulty and O’Keefe 2010). Weeks (2011) observes, “When it comes to the news of the day, newspapers, websites, bloggers, cable networks and aggregators all trip over themselves to be the fastest and the first. The competition has always existed, but technology has ramped up the rivalries. At this increasingly accelerated pace, is it inevitable that noteworthy events — and the news they engender — will rush lickety-split into each other? What happens when things just cannot occur any faster? What if the rapidity of the newscycle outpaces the news itself and we wind up in some form of warp speed — living life in a wormholish, time-wrinkled world?”

Implications. In light of this trend toward reciprocity and more comprehensive communication functions, public administrators should consider several points. (1) Effective public administrators will embrace two-way reciprocity with citizens and stakeholders rather than bemoan or avoid. They will work at reciprocity by
listening as well as persuading. This is what Grunig and Grunig (1992) call “negotiated meaning,” where the actual meaning results from a process of genuine give-and-take negotiation of ideas. (2) Public administrators need to disabuse themselves of the trend in some quarters to equate communication with information transfer (deHaven-Smith and Jenne 2006). As the coverage in PAR and elsewhere underscores, communication involves more than electronic message transmission. IT is not synonymous with communication. This misconception is compounded by a penchant for techno-fixes that assumes faster, smaller, more invasive types of technology can solve all communication problems.

The trend toward two-way communication with its upsides and downsides will thus continue for policy, behavioral, and technological reasons.

3. **Accompanying the movement toward more two-way communication are signs of more extreme communication.** In early 2011 public rhetoric in the United States has become so extreme and contentious that the lack of civil discourse has been blamed for creating the climate in which US Representative Gabrielle Giffords was shot and others killed. One reporter noted that while the United States has always had contentious rhetoric during, for example, the Civil Rights movement and Vietnam War, “What’s different about this moment is the emergence of a political culture — on blogs and Twitter and cable television — that so loudly and readily reinforces the dark visions of political extremists, often for profit or political gain. It wasn’t clear Saturday whether the alleged shooter in Tucson was motivated by any real political philosophy or by voices in his head, or perhaps by both. But it’s hard not to think he was at least partly influenced by a debate that often seems to conflate philosophical disagreement with some kind of political Armageddon” (Bai 2011). This tragedy sparked a national discussion about the need for more civil discourse of public issues. In an attempt to
increase civility in the fractious US Congress, opposing parties sat with each other during the Presidential State of the Union message for the first time in memory. Whether a harbinger of increased civility or more symbolic than real—only time will tell. The United States is hardly the only nation where public discourse over difficult issues such as immigration, economic policy, and abortion often generate more heat than light. The temperature gauge for public debate appears to have risen in many developed and developing nations.

Even though modern communications technology may carry attacks, gossip, and lies faster and more widely than before, technology did not create this condition. Ornstein and Mann (2000) noted over a decade ago before the explosion of social networking media the presence of what they called the permanent campaign—the tendency for the combative nature of electoral campaigns to carry over into governing. Opposing political parties and opposing interests, they observe, are increasingly seen as adversaries to beat rather than as advocates with whom to compromise. Communicating in such permanent campaigns takes the form of manipulating public opinion to sell new policies or justify existing ones more than to inform. While politics has always been part of administration, the permanent campaign at its extreme has substituted politics for administration and governance. The degree to which politics overrides policy varies by administration and jurisdiction. What appears clear is that governing has become more contentious and combative overall. Thus, while strong ideological or partisan rhetoric has existed before, today’s discourse has more potential to spin out of control because multiple, diverse communication media facilitate quick, often inaccurate or inflamed communication—whether deliberate or inadvertent.
Implications. How should public administrators respond to this trend toward contentiousness? Several ways come to mind. (1) Public administrators will need to work on understanding and increasing their Emotional Intelligence to perceive better other people’s feelings and to control their own in order to respond appropriately. EQ (Emotional Intelligence Quotient) has proven in some studies to be more important than IQ to managerial success (Whetten and Cameron 2010). (2) Public administrators will need more than ever to check the accuracy of messages before acting on them. The newer communications media may multiply the ways misleading messages are conveyed but they also provide ways of checking accuracy. Sites such as FactCheck.org from the Annenberg Center for Public Policy, PolitiFact.com sponsored by the St. Petersburg Times and Congressional Quarterly and the Washington Post’s Fact-Checker.com and a growing number of others enable quick checking of information circulating by email, website, blogs, and other forms. Of course, there is no substitute for checking one’s own reliable sources, especially when a statement or information is unlikely to be national news.

4. The impact of communication on public sector policies and performance needs to be understood better. This problem is discussed elsewhere as the performance predicament (Garnett 1997a; Garnett, Marlowe and Pandey 2008) that states that costs of government communication are generally easier to measure than its benefits, making it difficult to demonstrate a favorable performance ratio. Political economists following the example of Downs (1967) have tended to emphasize the transaction costs of time, financial and human resources, and political capital involved in communicating. Even though some costs such as the time senior officials devote to news conferences, television appearances, and the like may not be typically measured, budgets of public affairs/information units can usually be isolated and charged to the costs denominator.
Demonstrating benefits of communicating becomes far more difficult. Drawing upon the public relations research of Dozier and Ehling (1992) a formidable sequence of implementation levels required to demonstrate the important results of communication can be traced. Since administrative communication generally involves intended behavior change, to demonstrate these results would require meeting the following conditions. 1. Messages are sent. 2. Messages are placed (in media, department newsletter or message board, etc.). 3. Messages actually reach potential audience (show up in their e-mail or their newspaper, e.g.). 4. Message is actually attended to by the audience (read, heard). 5. Audience actually absorbs message content. 6. Audience actually changes opinions based on message. 7. Audience changes attitudes based on message. 8. Audience actually behaves in the desired direction (e.g., employees decrease absenteeism, citizens recycle waste). 9. Audience repeats desired behavior, and, in the case of major government communication efforts… 10. Communication leads to social and cultural change. Measuring whether communication has met these conditions is costly, methodologically complex, and time-consuming (Dozier and Ehling, 1992, Ehling, 1992). For these reasons, measurement of communication results typically stops at level 2: number of messages placed and sometimes level 3: number who actually receive message (e.g., report circulation or radio audience). Rarely does evaluation of communication efforts extend beyond such input measures to the realm of impacts or outcomes—levels 5 and beyond (Dozier and Ehling, 1992). This lack of evaluation is a larger problem in government communication than in corporate public relations where most of the research has occurred. The consequences of not evaluating government communication or assessing only those indicators easily measurable are, I believe, identical to those found by Broom and Dozier (1983, 5) when they wrote that when the communication function in organizations pays no attention to communication effects or to
measuring them, it “is relegated to the status of an output function that executives systematically exclude from
decision making and strategic planning.”

**Implications.** (1) To get the most from their communication efforts, public administrators need to be as
concerned with assessing communication performance as for other management functions. Such assessment
can take different forms—survey, focus group, observation of behavior (e.g. pedestrian crossing), measurement
of outcome changes, and others. And evaluations are needed for the multiple communication functions. Paying
attention only to perceived changes in media coverage only captures one aspect. Due to complexities involved
and the state of communication measurement, such evaluations will hardly be foolproof but gains are being
made in evaluating the effects of communication (Garnett, Marlowe and Pandey 2008; Kim 2001; Mosco 2009;
Watson and Noble 2007). If viewed with common sense and perspective such evaluations can inform
communicating and decisionmaking.

5. **Public Administration as a profession needs to bolster the education of future public managers for
communicating effectively.** Not only has communication only recently approached the attention it deserves
within public administration scholarship, it has lagged on the education and practice fronts as well. One reason
for this is what Garnett (1997a) calls the Expertise Error: *The prevailing attitude that communication is common
and therefore routine--anybody can do it.* Clampitt (1993: ix) refers to this as the “Everybody/Anybody
phenomenon. Translation: since everybody communicates, anyone can hold a seminar on the subject.” Because
most people involved in administration possess an above average level of education, there appears to be a tendency
to think they know how to communicate. After all they have done considerable amounts of speaking and writing in
their schooling and professional careers. Why should they take courses or read books or articles on the subject?
Other subjects such as financial management, systems analysis, or even budgeting appear to be more rigorous, non-routine and therefore demanding of special attention. Communication suffers in professional influence and prestige because, using Rourke’s (1972) formulation, it has clarity of means and obscurity of results rather than obscurity of means and clarity of results which, according to Rourke (1972: 249) “...seems an irresistible formula for success as far as any professional group is concerned.” The notion that communication is somehow less rigorous is captured by a the statement that at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, “agency culture strongly emphasizes leadership development and leadership skills (including soft skills related to communication, recognition, etc.)” (Chief Human Capital Officers Council 2008, 9).

Paradoxically, communication also gets short shrift because it is challenging. The Difficulty Dilemma states that Far from being simple or routine, authentic communication is extraordinarily difficult. It requires enormous time, effort, personal risk, and maturity--capacities minimized in the structures of formal work organizations. Foltz (1973: 1) sensed this problem when he wrote, “Let’s get rid of the thought that there’s nothing to communications. Let’s recognize that communications is tough, hard, demanding. It’s one of the most damned and least understood skills in existence. It’s at the core of every problem facing us as individuals, families, groups, nations.” Because communication is so tough, it has been damned by those who want a quicker return on their invested effort. Presenting effectively to a legislative committee or listening empathically to a grieving employee requires considerable skill and effort, more than some people are prepared or able to devote.

A small, but growing number of public administration programs address communication either in designated courses or as part of other management or policy courses. This compares to education for business administration where nearly all masters-level and undergraduate programs have courses in business
communication or the equivalent and where communication get emphasis in the curriculum. The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration’s Accreditation Standards for Master’s Degree Programs adopted in 2009 apply to programs in the United States and a growing number of international programs. These new standards do give more emphasis to communication by specifically including it in the set of Universal Required Competencies all graduates should possess.

Universal Required Competencies:
• to lead and manage in public governance;
• to participate in and contribute to the policy process;
• to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions;
• to articulate and apply a public service perspective;
• to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry. (Standard 5.1, p. 7). [Ephasis added]

That communication is instrumental to these other universal competencies is evident, although unstated. Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation revised January 2011 by the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business also lists communication among the general knowledge and skills that programs should address but proceeds to stress communication far more in examples of learning goals and their measurement and specify communications as a field of expertise to be drawn from other parts of the university. While communication in various forms gets attention twenty times in AACSB standards, NASPAA standards address communication only twice with respective to student learning and four times relating to program contact with stakeholders. This comparison, while crude, does reflect different emphasis.
The ongoing shift from the mechanistic, industrial age to the information age requires different qualities for success. Where obeying orders and staying out of trouble were required in the industrial age, the information age “requires resourceful and individualistic people who accept responsibility and are capable of using all their skills” (Ruch, 1989: 6). Public administration education, therefore, will be challenged to prepare fewer people for the public service, but those who are trained will need broader and deeper knowledge and skill than before. Future education for public service will require stronger preparation in communication because of its integral linkage to learning, action, and reform (Halachmi, 1997. And the future of public administration practice and scholarship depends on how well we fare with learning, action, and reform—and therefore communication. In a future where public administrators must increasingly cope with diversity, conflict, crisis, organizational spanning, globalization, technological explosion, and other challenges; communicative competence becomes even more crucial for success.

**Implications.** To meet the increasing challenges of public sector management, the field needs to (1) Continue to strengthen standards for communication instruction; (2) Heed feedback from practitioners that communication skills are essential to professional effectiveness; (3) Increase collaboration with communication schools on both teaching and research.

This essay has reviewed direct and indirect *Public Administration Review* coverage of administrative communication on nine different topics and articulated five issues of growing importance to the field. Even though administrative communication was just one of the assigned topics, the breadth and centrality of communication required me to cover a range of topics, some of them included elsewhere in the Foundations Series and others not covered elsewhere. My intent has been to provide a synthesis of PAR and other coverage of key topics and to encourage others to engage in communication research, teaching, and practice.
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