

NCA's Monthly Teleconference Series
CARD Calls: Communicating About Research and Professional Development

The Role of Communication Scholarship in Public Policy

Featured Speakers:

Robert Asen, Professor, Communication Arts, University of Wisconsin, Madison;
H.L. (Bud) Goodall Jr., Professor, Hugh Downs School of Communication, Arizona State University;
and Howard Silver, Executive Director, Consortium of Social Science Associations

Moderator:

Melissa Anderson, Coordinator for Research & Educational Initiatives
National Communication Association

Tuesday, January 19, 2010
1:00pm Eastern time





Rhetoric and Public Policy

Robert Asen



Public policy operates as a mediation of rhetorical and material forces

- Material: public policies provide money, goods, and services to target populations to achieve particular outcomes
- Rhetorical: policies create, sustain, negotiate, and redefine the meanings of the very money, goods, and services provided



Policymaking foregrounds rhetoric as a constitutive force

- The various components of the policymaking process represent acts of communication
- The primary connection that many policymakers have to specific policy initiatives is through their involvement in debates over these initiatives



Multiple authorship shapes the meaning of policy texts

- Because of their multiple authorship, policy texts do not readily cohere thematically
- Multiple authorship constrains the participation and significance of any single advocate in a policy debate



In policy texts, discourse acts as a relatively independent force

- Discourse provides “speaking positions” that various advocates can adopt, such that the identity of the advocate often matters less than the tenet articulated



Policy texts make meaning over time

- What may constitute text at one historical moment changes into context at another
- Policy debates exhibit multiple temporalities, with different aspects of debate often proceeding at different speeds



Policy debates constitute polysemous texts

- Crosses categories of rhetor, audience, and critic-induced polysemy
- We must remain cognizant of the purposeful character of policy debate



CSC

Consortium for
Strategic Communication

Consortium for Strategic Communication

Arizona State University

NCA Teleconference "The Role of Communication Scholarship in Public Policy"

January 2010

Bud Goodall

Identifying and countering extremist Narratives

Embedding Story analysts in expeditionary units



The Communication Problem

According to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (Admiral Mike Mullen) the “War of Ideas” is essentially a “Battle of Narratives”

Military and diplomatic personnel do not understand what a narrative is or does, only that narratives are important

They ask: “Narratives help us understand cultures--we get that--but how?”

What they want to know: “Is there some way to identify narratives that gaining traction among targeted populations, so that leaders can make better decisions about what to do--from deploying humanitarian aid to deploying troops to exiting the region?”

End Result: If you can do that, can you train Expeditionary Team members to become narrative analysts?



Our Narrative Project

- Overview of ONR Project
- Importance of Narrative
 - Description of Task 1: Narrative model and database
 - Description of Task 2: Traction model and heat index
- What We've Learned So Far--The Implications for Improving the Influence of Communication Scholarship in Public Policy
- Discussion



Overview

- ◎ ONR-funded project focusing on narrative in contested populations
 - SEA
 - North Africa/Southern Europe
 - Middle East
- ◎ Project Status
 - Phase I (underway)
 - Task 1: Narrative model and database
 - Task 2: Develop traction model and heat index
 - Phase II (pending)
 - Task 3: Develop training materials
 - Task 4: Field-test and evaluate



Importance of Narrative

- Stories are important conveyors of cultural information and knowledge
 - Can be used to frame the action of enemies...
 - ...as well our own
- Stories can be invoked in fragmentary form meaningful to cultural insiders but not to outsiders
 - “And here's Cheney and Powell, killing and destroying many in Baghdad, more than Hulagu, the king of the Tatars.” (OBL, 2003)



Task I: Narrative model & DB

- Connect academic ideas about narrative to a real world problem
- Develop schema for building narrative structures from known stories
- Develop database of stories in target areas
 - Usable by operators
 - Usable by analysts & modelers



Traditional Narrative Methods

- “Close” reading & interpretation of text
- Problems
 - Very micro-oriented & labor intensive
 - Results are themselves meta-narratives
 - Reproduce worldview of analyst
 - Comparison across stories is difficult



Trends Toward Macro Analysis

- Scholars applying more “scientific” approaches to analysis of narrative
- Focus on more abstract features
- Apply “spatial” analysis techniques
- Emphasize comparison across multiple stories



CSC Model—Humanities Tack

- Identify **master narratives**
 - Often invoked in fragmentary form
 - “Hidden” from semantic analysis
 - Serve ideological functions
- **Components**
 - **Story**: A sequence of events related for rhetorical purposes
 - **Story form**: Story types that create expected roles and plots for an audience
 - **Archetype**: Fundamental cultural icons, cultural figures, images, or models
 - **Narrative**: A system of related stories

Example: The Pharaoh

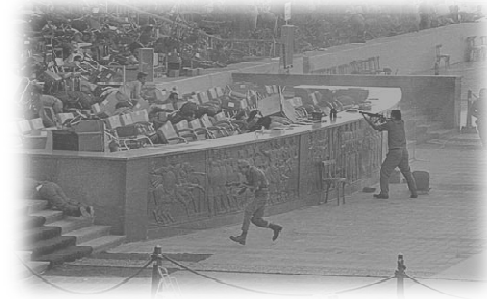
- Prominent story in Qur'an: Confrontation between Moses and the Pharaoh of Egypt
 - Pharaoh is cruel tyrant
 - Believes he is Supreme Lord
 - Rejects message of Moses
 - God drowns Pharaoh even though he repents at last minute
 - God casts his preserved body onto a warning to all generations



Other Instances

Sadat Assassination

“I have killed the Pharaoh!”



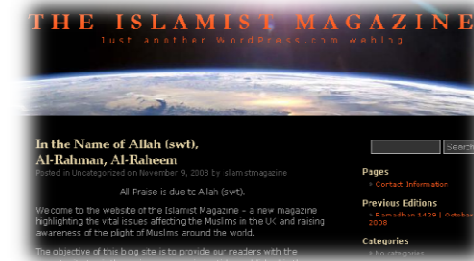
Ariel Sharon

Sharon as Pharaoh



Islamist Publications

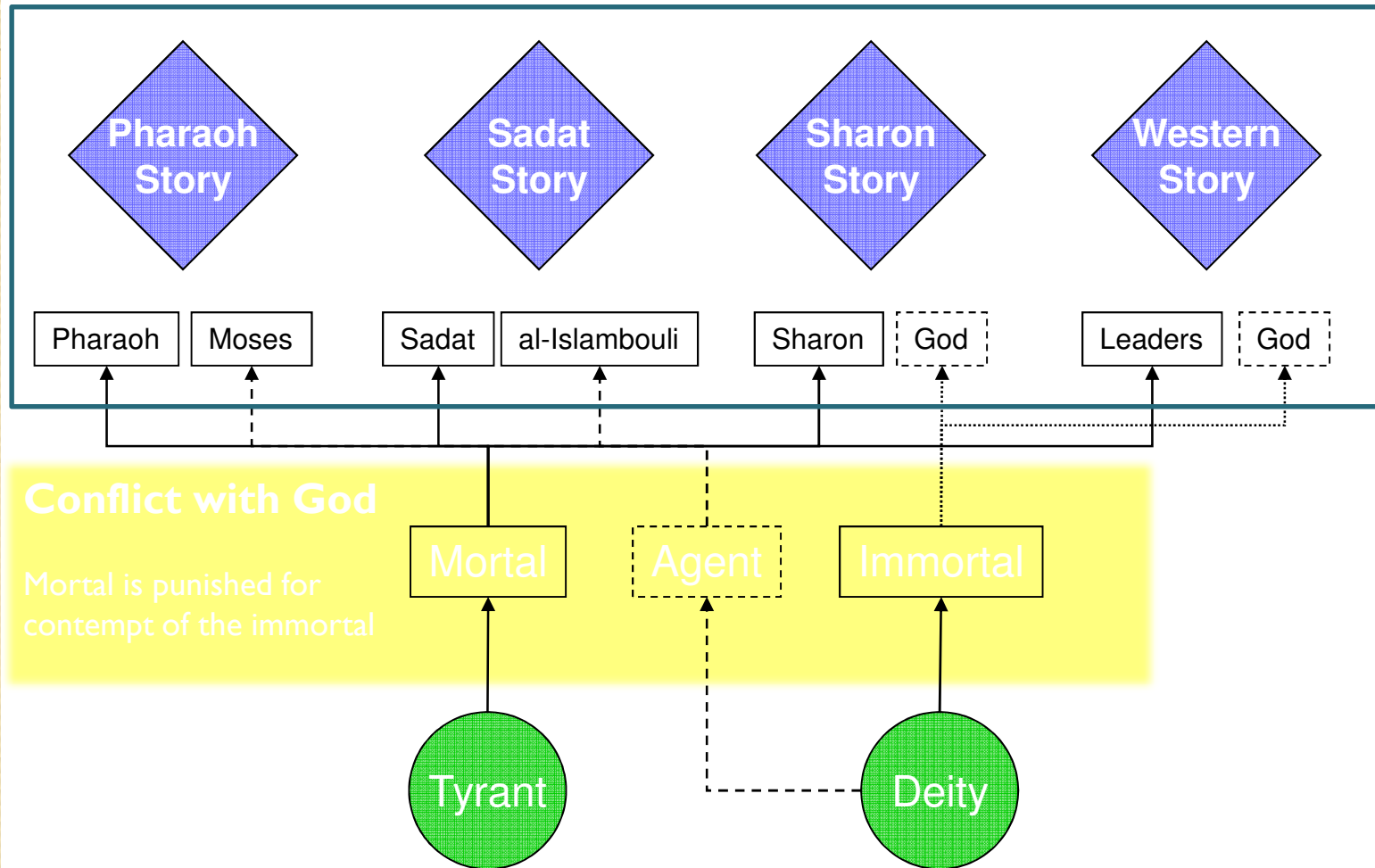
Modern Western leaders as Pharaoh



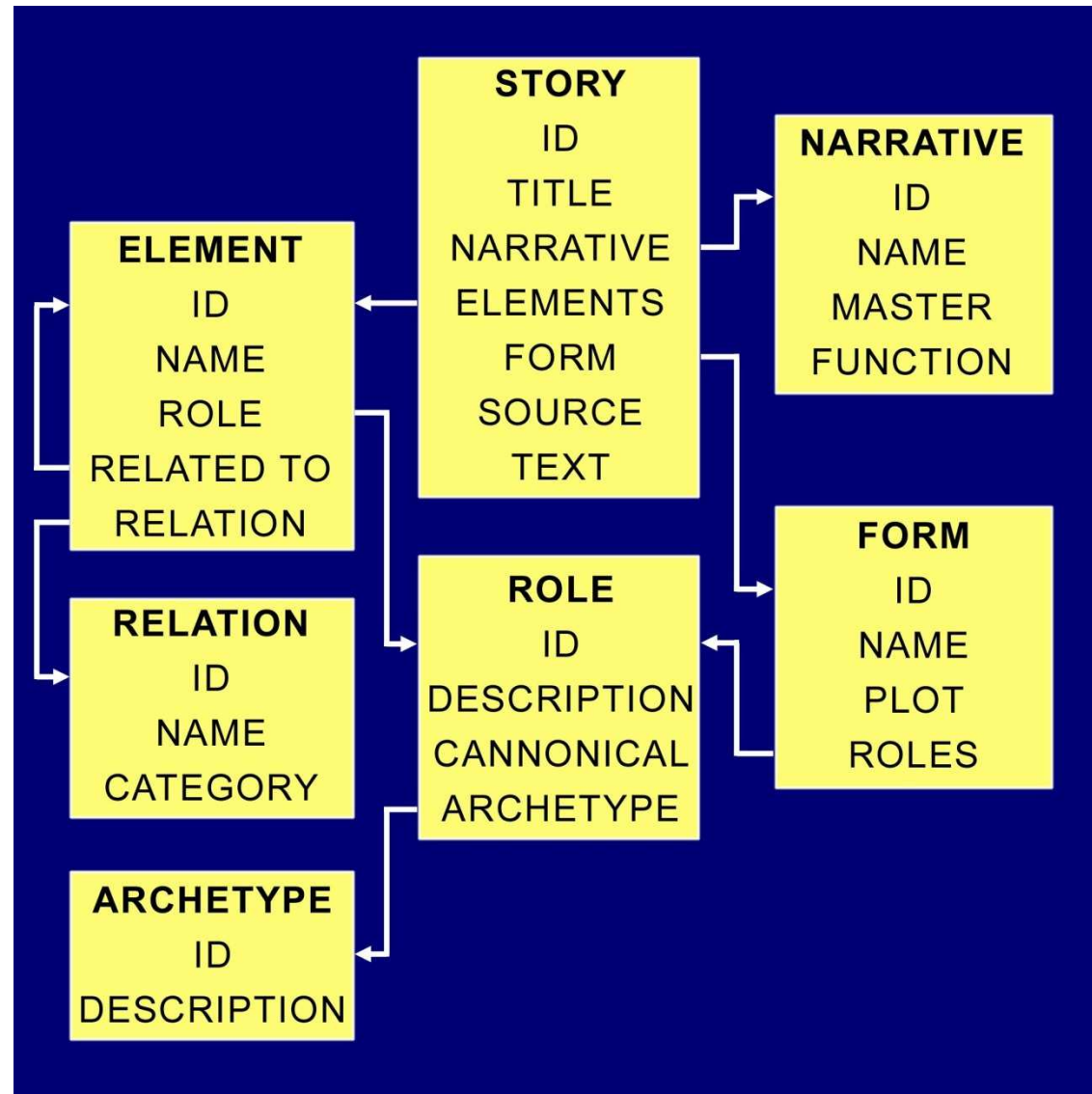
Underlying Narrative Coherence

Narrative

Archetype Story Form



Narrative Database





Advantages of this Approach

- ◎ **Overcomes limitations** of existing approaches
 - Greater abstraction
 - Support cross-story analysis
 - → Potential generality
- ◎ **Links seemingly disparate stories** into a common narrative framework
 - Discovery of connections where none are apparent
 - Identifiable from semantic analysis or master narrative research
- ◎ **Supports counter-narrative design**
 - Identify analogies to be contested
 - Identify roles that can be recast
- ◎ **Network form** supports modeling & integration



Task 2: Traction Model & Heat Index

- Inventory existing theory & research on message spread factors
- Eliminate unimportant/redundant factors using simulation
- Develop “heat index” that operators can use for reporting



Traction Model

- ◎ A story might be in circulation but is it getting *traction*?
 - Going viral—spreading rapidly from person to person
 - Transmediation—proliferating across media
- ◎ RQ: What is a practical set of indicators?
 - Small in number
 - Non-redundant
 - Supports operator judgments



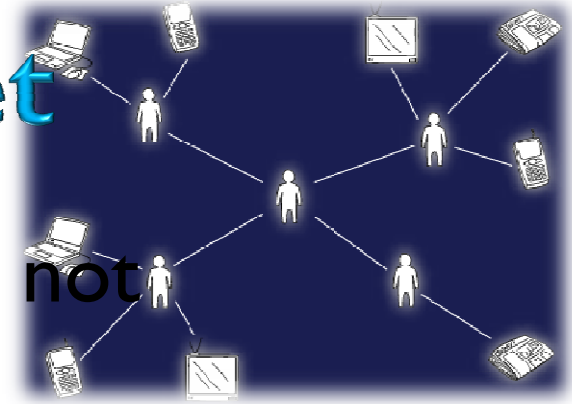
Equivocal Academic Literature

- Many different theoretical traditions
 - Diffusion of innovations
 - Memetics
 - Ideodynamics
 - Viral marketing
- Each with a small set of limited factors
- Approach: Broad survey of literature across fields, theories

Preliminary Categories

- Message characteristics
 - Simplicity
 - Salience
- Source factors
 - Credibility
 - Opinion leadership
- Receiver factors
 - Skepticism
 - Existing beliefs
- Delivery factors
 - Repetition
 - Competition
- Community characteristics
 - Openness
 - Size

Resolving Best Set



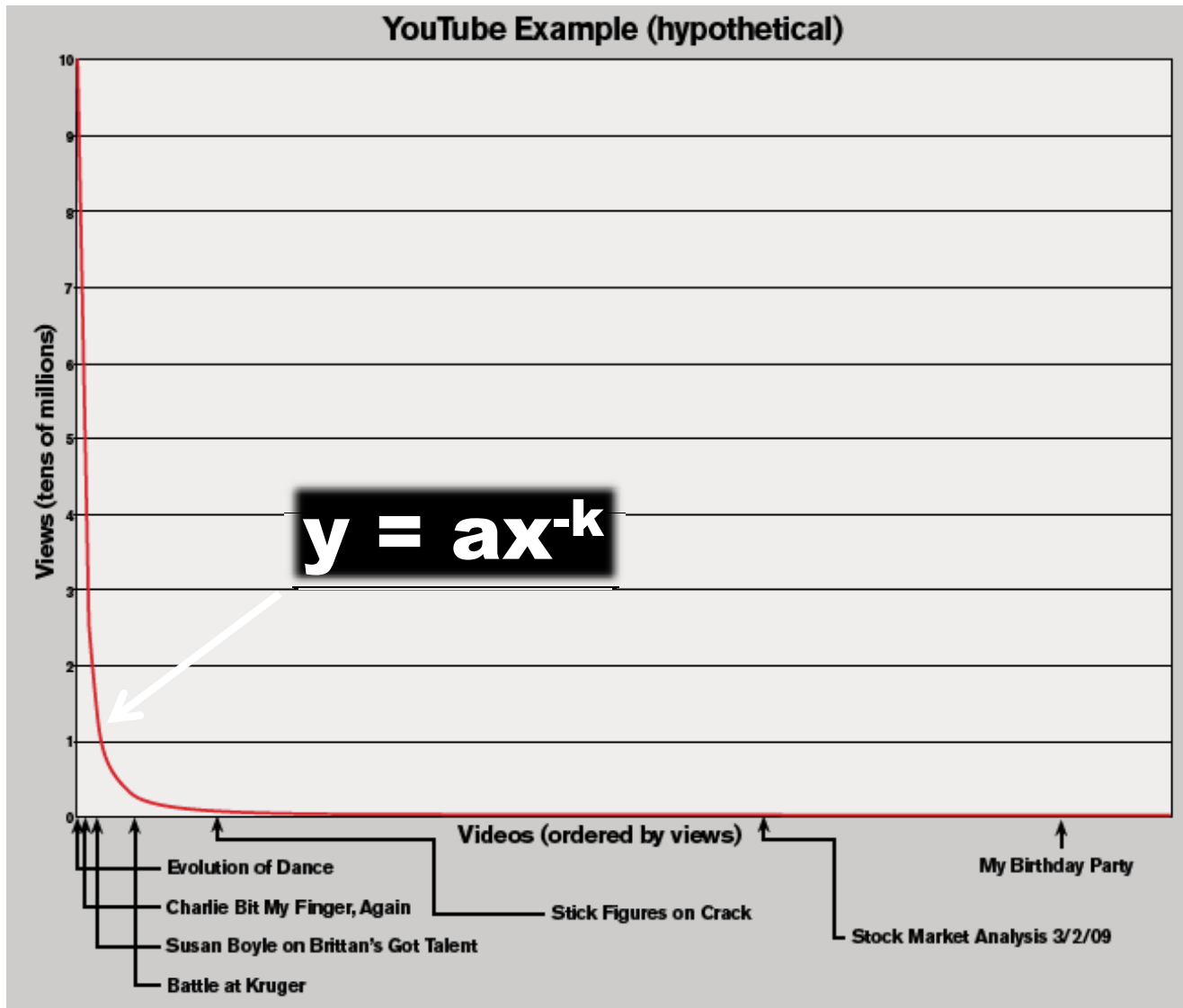
- Factors just identified are not independent
 - Delivery repetition may offset message complexity
 - Community openness may counteract receiver skepticism
- Strategy: Create agent based model to test different combinations of factors
- Find simplest valid set of factors



Recognizing the Best Set

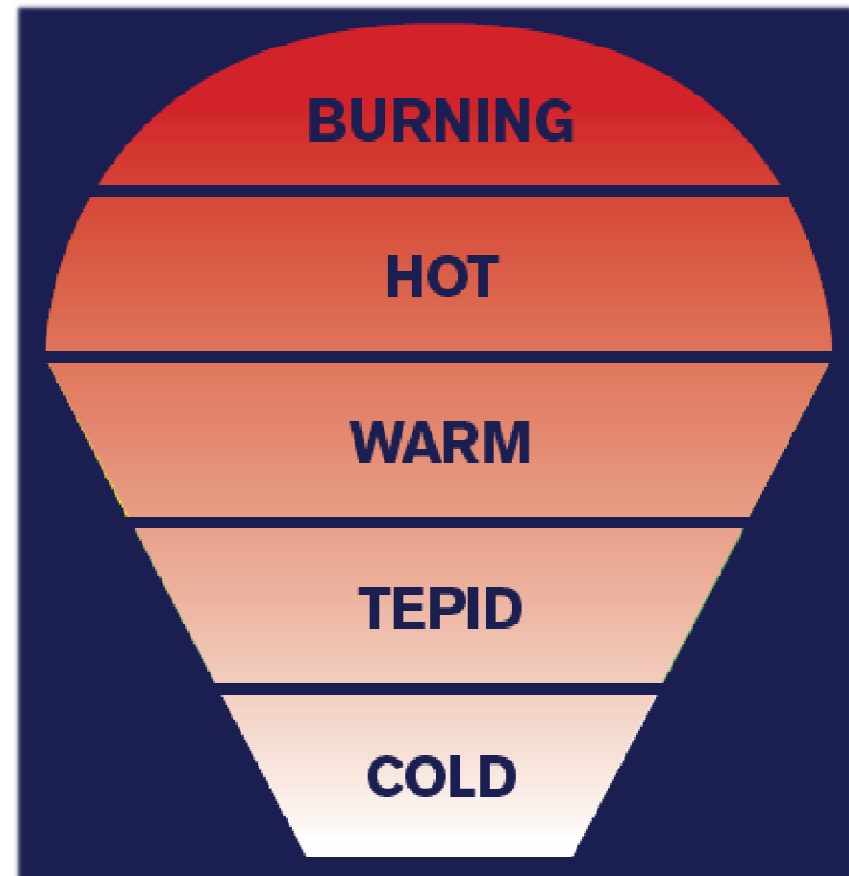
- Empirical grounding in existing descriptive research
 - Messages spread through social networks
 - Given them a “power law” distribution
 - Existing descriptive studies have documented known distributions
- Example: YouTube videos

Recognizing the Best Set



Heat Index

- ① Traction model will identify a reduced set of factors
- ① Still too complicated for the purposes of making reports to commanders
- ① Develop simple quantifiable measure of message traction and uptake



General Implications:

Toward Improving the Influence of Communication Research in Public Policy

- Focus on Real Communication Problems
 - Enter “the conversation” and find out what end users and potential sponsors think the problems are;
 - Develop an interdisciplinary, multi-methods team to address one of them;
 - Write a “white paper,” then develop a funding proposal based on feedback from sponsors
 - Continue to write and publish white papers
- Money Matters
 - The larger the capital investment, the more you gain influence with policy makers and opinion leaders
 - Meet milestones; exceed expectations
- Results Count
 - Seek and sustain public scholarship profile as well as academic publications and papers



COSSA

Consortium of Social Science Associations

**THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION SCHOLARSHIP IN
PUBLIC POLICY**

National Communication Association Teleconference

Howard J. Silver, Ph.D.

Executive Director

Consortium of Social Science Associations

(COSSA)

January 19, 2010



COSSA GOVERNING MEMBERS

- American Association for Public Opinion Research
 - American Economic Association
 - American Educational Research Association
 - American Historical Association
 - American Political Science Association
 - American Psychological Association
 - American Society of Criminology
 - American Sociological Association
 - American Statistical Association
 - Association of American Geographers
 - Association of American Law Schools
 - Law and Society Association
 - Linguistic Society of America
 - Midwest Political Science Association
 - National Communication Association
 - Population Association of America
 - Rural Sociological Society
 - Society for Research in Child Development
- Also 23 Member Organizations, 57 Universities, 12 Centers and Institutes



COSSA HISTORY

- 1981 Reagan Budget Cuts Social Science Research, COSSA formed.
- 1982 COSSA Moves beyond NSF and beyond budgets
- COSSA ensures Social Sciences at the Table in U.S. Science Policy
 - Separate Directorate at the National Science Foundation (NSF)
 - Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research at the National Institutes of Health
- Responding to Attacks on Social Science
 - Eliminate the NSF Directorate 1995-96
 - Attempts to Defund Sexual Behavior Research –latest 2009
 - Attacks on Social/Behavioral Science at NSF– eliminate political science program 2009



COSSA ACTIVITIES

- Routine Lobbying – meet with congressional, agency staffs
- Testifying – Appropriations Hearings
- Coalitions – working with the rest of science and higher education community
- Newsletter – COSSA Washington UPDATE
- Capitol Hill Briefings & Receptions
- Briefing Constituency Groups
- Enhancing Diversity Retreat and Seminar
- www.cossa.org



COALITIONS

- Coalition to Protect Research (CPR) – COSSA co-chairs
- Coalition for the Advancement of Health Through Behavioral and Social Science Research (CAHT-BSSR) – COSSA co-chairs
- Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) – COSSA chaired 1994-2000
- Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research Funding – COSSA on Steering Committee
- Friends of ... (health and disease groups)



MAJOR POLICY INITIATIVES

National Innovation Strategy – Research turning into Products turning into Jobs
Science of Science and Innovation Policy – NSF
Improving Education especially in Math and Science – NSF, ED
Cyber-Enabled Discovery and Innovation – NSF
Climate Change and Energy Policy – NSF, DOE, NOAA
Comparative Effectiveness Research – NIH, AHRQ
Obesity and Healthy Lifestyles – NIH, CDC, AG
Personalized Medicine – NIH
Gene/Environment Interactions – NIH
National Children’s Study – NIH
Project Minerva – DOD and NSF
Evaluations: Evidence Based Policy – ED, JUSTICE
Revitalizing Housing Research – HUD
Transforming Research on Rural America -- USDAGRIC



SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES AND PUBLIC POLICY (1)

Climate Change – Human Dimensions,
Mitigation/Adaptation

Energy – Conservation, Behavior Change

Human Capital – Learning, Skill Formation,
Workforce



SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES AND PUBLIC POLICY (2)

Demographic Change – Aging, Migration, Families

Organizational Change – Institutional and Individual Arrangements in an Internet Age

Global Issues – Conflict, Cooperation, Terrorism, Economic Growth, International Entities



SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES AND PUBLIC POLICY (3)

Public Health – Obesity, Health Disparities, AIDS/STDs

A Fair Society – Civil Liberties, Affirmation Action

Decision Making – Individuals, Businesses, Governments

Ethical, Legal, Social Implications of Technology



“Perhaps the most important role of the social sciences, among their many roles, is to provide this basic fund of knowledge about ourselves and our institutions – a foundation of reality for the thinking and decision making of legislators, managers, both governmental and corporate, and all of us as citizens, householders, and employees.”

*Nobel Prize and National Medal of Science Recipient Herbert
Simon
before the House Committee on Science and Technology*



THANK YOU!

HOWARD J. SILVER, Ph.D.

silverhj@cosssa.org

www.cosssa.org

2009-2010 CARD Calls Registration Form for NCA Members

To register for one or more of the teleconferences, please fill out this form and return it to Melissa Anderson via email manderson@natcom.org or fax (202) 464-4600. Please note that the registration deadline for each teleconference is 72 hours prior to the start of the teleconference. However, there will be a registration limit of 100 phone lines (more than one person can be participating from a single phone line), so please register for the teleconferences that interest you as soon as possible to ensure that you get spots. You will receive a registration confirmation email within 48 hours of submitting this form. Slides for the presentation and dial-in information will be sent to all registered teleconference participants 48 hours before the teleconference.

Name:
Affiliation:
Email Address:
Phone Number:



Registration for: (please X all teleconferences for which you would like to be registered)

- **The Art of (English) Public Speaking in China: Pedagogy, Research, and Intercultural Communication**
Stephen Lucas, Professor, Department of Communication Arts, Evjue-Bascom Professor in the Humanities, University of Wisconsin, Madison & NCA Distinguished Scholar
Thursday, February 18, 2010—2:00pm Eastern _____
- **Service Learning in Communication**
Jimmie Manning, Assistant Professor and Graduate Program Director of Communication, College of Informatics, Northern Kentucky University; Jamey Piland, Associate Professor, Communication, Trinity (Washington) University; Toni Whitfield, Associate Professor, Communication Studies, James Madison University; and Michael Woeste, Associate Professor, Communication, University of Cincinnati
Friday, March 19, 2010—3:00pm Eastern _____
- **Defining Marriage in California: An Analysis of Public & Technical Argument**
Edward Schiappa, Paul W. Frenzel Chair in Liberal Arts & Department Chair, Department of Communication Studies, University of Minnesota & NCA Distinguished Scholar
Monday, April 12, 2010—12:00pm Eastern _____
- **Current Trends in Higher Education for Communication**
Diana Carlin, Professor, Communication Studies Department, University of Kansas; William Eadie, Professor, Journalism & Media Studies, San Diego State University; and Scott Jaschik, Editor, Inside Higher Education
Thursday, May 13, 2010—1:00pm Eastern _____

If you have any questions about the teleconference series, please contact Melissa Anderson at manderson@natcom.org or (202) 534-1111.

January 19, 2010 Conference Call: Dial-In Information

- Dial the Access Number: **1.800.920.7487**
- When prompted, enter the Participant Code followed by #
- Your Participant Code is **66623635#**

Participant Star Commands

- ***4-** Volume: Pressing ***4** will increase/decrease the volume
- **Q & A Session:** Participants press ***1** to ask a question, and the moderator will take your questions in the order that they arrive
- For technical assistance during the teleconference, contact Customer Service at **1.800.989.9239**