Criminal Justice Organizations

Administration and Management

Sixth Edition

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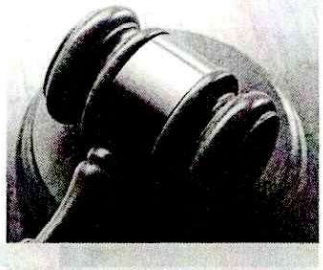
CHAPTER 4



Problems of Communication

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, the students will have achieved the following objectives:

- Know the five steps of the communication process.
- Be familiar with the nine barriers to communications.
- Understand how communication and information flow through an agency's chain of command.
- Understand informal communication networks in the workplace.
- Understand nonverbal communication.
- Understand the difference between communication and information.
- Understand exchange theory and exchange networks.
- Define linking pin theory.

VIGNETTE

My undergraduate economics professor wrote a book recently on his academic and personal experiences. He made mention of two of his more interesting students who happened to be me and a close friend of mine. His comments speak to the issue of diversity and communication:

"Both were kids from Cleveland and had Polish thick in their blood. If one listened to one of these students carelessly and heard only his accent and not his word choice and what he said, he sounded as if he had been admitted by mistake. He won the freshman

writing prize; hence, he was a good writer. The other went on to earn a PhD in economics and surprised me by sending me a copy of a book he had written" (Landreth, 2012, p. 39).

My friend and I were students at Miami University of Ohio in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Dr. Harry Landreth, our Harvard-trained economics professor, had the ability to listen beyond our guttural Slavic, Cleveland, Ohio, accents and hear what we were saying. Not all listeners can get past the barrier of a regional or ethnic-based speaking accent. Conventional wisdom during that time period held that our country was a "melting pot" that would continuously homogenize all citizens into common values and a common spoken language. Civil rights for African-Americans were being discussed then, but the current notion of diversity—a nation of multiple cultures and languages—was not on anyone's radar.

Things have changed dramatically over the last few decades. We recognize diversity and systematically try not to discriminate against anyone because of their ethnicity or gender. Decades of immigration and relative differences in birthrates between ethnic groups have changed the demographic makeup of our Nation. Some demographers believe that by 2050, most Americans will be from Hispanic backgrounds and African Americans will represent about 20 percent of the population. Some areas like the Midwest remain predominantly white, but a number of communities throughout the country are profoundly diverse. In my community, Delray Beach, Florida, for example, we have Caucasians, Hispanics, a large Haitian community, and a growing number of Asians. Moreover, English is a second language for most of our community's Haitian, Hispanic, and Asian citizens. This mixed demographic with English as a second language is the rule for most southeastern, southern, and southwestern states as well as New York City, perhaps the most ethnically diverse city in the country.

The diversity we are experiencing and growing number of American citizens for whom English is their second language creates a communication problem. Hence, when we call most businesses of any size or governmental offices, the phone system directs us to press 1 for English and 2 for Spanish—and in some places, 3 for Haitians, and 4 for Asians. Some people find this annoying. But businesses that don't accommodate non-English-speaking customers are not competitive. Many cities in South Florida attempt to hire police officers who are from multiple ethnic groups in the community. It is reasoned, for example, that Haitian American police officers will better understand and communicate with the city's Haitian population. While it probably it is wise to have a police force that is representative of a city's ethnic makeup, unintended issues with communication within diverse departments will exist.

Yong (2013) discusses stereotype traps individuals fall into based on their own negative feelings about their primary reference group—ethnicity/gender, and so forth—and feelings of others. "I am a woman, women are not good at math, and therefore I will do poorly on a math test" is one example. The anxiety that comes from being caught in the stereotype trap tends to limit academic success. Dr. Landreth, my economics professor, was able to avoid the stereotype trap and listened to

my friend and me and heard what we were saying. English is our dominant language, all reports in criminal justice agencies are written in English, and good grammar and spelling are required. But during formal and informal verbal exchanges among staff, listeners may not be able to hear past the ethnic or regional dialect of minority organizational member; hence, communication will be hampered.

Communication is the exchange of information between a sender and receiver that delivers meaning between the parties involved (Bowditch and Buono, 1997). From an organizational perspective, communication is the glue that holds a system together. Karl Weick (1979) describes the organizational process as a method to resolve ambiguities through the collective processing of information. The typical organization—private firm, federal regulatory agency, police, court system, or corrections agency—is structured in some logical way. To function effectively and meet its goals, the individuals in an organization must establish a system of communication along with a language that permits an understanding of the system's processes and logic (Schein, 2004). Consider also the extent of communication that goes on in the workplace. Throughout the day, memoranda and e-mail messages abound as well as constant face-to-face conversations. In addition, staff attends formal meetings and they meet informally at the "water cooler." Staff can communicate with text messages or through personal or business phones. Communication is an endless stream of messages, and all the information is difficult to harness and manage.

But whether or not the organization functions logically, in a coordinated manner, and achieves its goals depends greatly on the quality of its communication—its ability to process information. Hence, all members of an organization are directed to communicate along certain pathways and, within certain limits, to facilitate coordination among members and among components of the organization. Most, if not all, organizational members understand the importance of communication.

Poor communication, however, is often blamed for problems that occur within an organization. For example, when subordinates disobey directives and are difficult to control, managers often assume that communication is faulty rather than examining more fundamental issues, such as the applicability of directives or the willingness of subordinates to follow orders. The pivotal question here is what we mean by poor communication or, for that matter, communication itself. Communication impacts and is scripted by an organization's environmental forces, formal structure, human interactions between its members and clients, and organizational politics, as well as by the theater, rich with symbols and self-expression, in which organizational members play out their roles (Bolman and Deal, 2003). In complex organizations, poor communication in the theater of human dialogue carries implications far beyond a poorly worded memo or a broken fax machine—although all three contribute to poor communications. Identifying an organizational breakdown as a function of faulty communication is often a convenient solution for problems but is typically only the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

The basic element of communication is a *dyad*: two individuals **transmitting** symbols back and forth or, more simply, two people communicating. Dyads may range from intimate to professional to ad hoc (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2006; Trenholm and Jensen, 1992). To understand the complexity of communication within organizations, we can think of an infinite number of interchangeable dyads attempting to process information using an infinite number of symbols through a number of charted and uncharted pathways and over a number of identifiable and invisible hurdles.

Transmitting: Sender conveys his or her message through a medium, for example, the sender makes a phone call.

This chapter is an attempt to identify and discuss briefly the complex strands of communication in the criminal justice system. We begin with a description of the basic dyad and discuss briefly the hurdles and pathways faced by actors playing a role in the criminal justice system. We also apply the basic theories of communication to individual practitioners in the criminal justice system, considering the unique and varied interactions they routinely perform. We conclude with prescriptions for criminal justice administrators, advising our readers not to view communication as a phenomenon separable from an organization's formal and informal structures and its culture. Communication dyads dance in a complex and changing community.

BASIC THEORY OF COMMUNICATION

Interpersonal communication begins with a basic dyad—one individual sending a message to another. Communication between two people can be thought of as a sequential process, with Person A encoding a message and then transmitting it through some medium, after which the message is received by Person B and decoded. If a message sent from Person A fails to get to Person B, no communication has taken place.

Communication Process

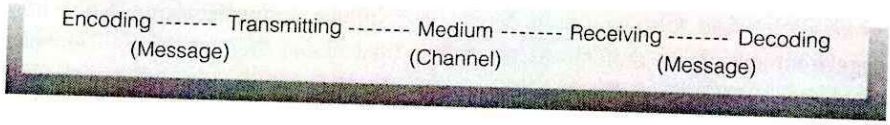
Encoding is the first step in the communication process. The sender feels the need to convey a message to another individual or individuals and encodes the meaning of the message into symbols. Words are the most familiar symbolic form to us, although communication with nonverbal symbols—Morse code flag signals, codes used by police dispatchers to briefly describe situations or orders—is also common.

Encoding: A sent message using appropriate symbols.

The sender's thoughts and meaning must be encoded into some verbal or nonverbal symbolic form before the message can be transmitted. The next step in the process is to transmit the message through a medium the sender selects. The intended receiver of the message must then receive the message and **decode** it—the receiver interprets the symbols conveyed in the message and gives them meaning. If the communication flows both ways, the receiver responds to the message with communication back to the sender, who now becomes the receiver. The completion of the dyad requires observation by the receiver, intention to communicate by the sender, and normative

Decode: The receiver of a message interprets and determines its meaning.

FIGURE 4.1 The Basic Communication Process.



judgment on the part of the sender and receiver (Littlejohn and Foss, 2005). Figure 4.1 shows the basic dyad interaction.

Nine Barriers to Communication

Although this process seems straightforward and reliable, we all know from personal experience that simple messages between two individuals are often not communicated effectively. The communication process is frequently unreliable for a number of reasons. Senders may not formulate their meaning properly in symbols that can be transmitted to the receiver. Stated simply, one must say what one intends to say. Assuming the sender has encoded and transmitted the message to the receiver with some accuracy, a series of communication barriers may intervene to block the communication or alter the meaning of the message. These include the following:

1. Preconceived ideas
2. Denial of contrary information
3. Use of personalized meanings
4. Lack of motivation or interest
5. Noncredibility of the source
6. Lack of communication skills
7. Poor organizational climate
8. Use of complex channels
9. Communication gap

Preconceived ideas: Receiver hears what he or she wants to hear.

Preconceived Ideas "People hear what they want to hear" best describes the phenomenon of **preconceived ideas**. If we have a preconceived idea about the information transmitted to us, we tend to receive and understand the message as that idea. Because conflict and mistrust between inmates and corrections officers are often based upon the stereotypical views each group holds toward the other (Kagehiro and Werner, 1981), it is not uncommon for corrections officers to encode their views inaccurately. A similar impediment to communication may exist between community police officers and residents of low-income communities (Carlson, 2005; Schneider, 1999).

Denial of Contrary Information Messages that conflict with information we have already accepted as valid are often denied or rejected. After assessing the message, we may reject information about the stock market based on prior information. This is a prudent or rational communication decision. However,

the message may conflict with our personal beliefs or values, in which case we reject it or deny its validity without any deliberation or thought. This **denial of contrary information** process, known as cognitive dissonance in the psychology literature, is the kind of denial of information that creates a communication barrier. Denial is also a common problem faced in rehabilitating offenders. Social-skills training, of which communication is a significant part, is considered therapeutic for young adult and juvenile offenders. Henderson and Hollin (1983) suggest improvement of such skills, including communication skills, will improve offenders' ability to overcome denial and adjust to their environments. Moreover, the denial of contrary information is a major impediment to interpersonal communication and communication competence (Sypher and Zorn 1986).

Denial of contrary information: Rejecting a message that conflicts with our personal beliefs.

Use of Personalized Meanings The words chosen by the sender and his or her **use of personalized meanings** may have a different meaning for the message receiver. Professional jargon or legal terminology may have little, no, or a different meaning to those outside the profession or legal system. Words and sentences that convey images of pleasure for one party may convey contrary images for another. A young person may refer to an experience with enthusiasm and say it was "really bad," meaning it was very good. Guilt is based on fact in the criminal justice system, but in psychiatry it depends on the state of one's conscience. Cultural differences between ethnic and gender groups may also affect personalized meanings (Madera 2011).

Use of personalized meanings: The words chosen by the sender may have a different meaning for the message receiver.

Lack of Motivation or Interest Motivation in communicating and interest in the message must exist for both the sender and receiver, at least to some reasonable extent, if a message is to be communicated effectively and to avoid **lack of motivation or interest**. Memo writing in organizations is a standard method of communication. However, if memoranda become excessive, personnel may lose interest in spending time reading them. If such a situation exists, a motivated communicator may supplement memos with a fresh or unique medium to get the attention of receivers.

Lack of motivation or interest: Interest in the message or motivation to receive the message must be present to create a successful communication process.

Noncredibility of the Source The sender of a message may not be believable for a number of reasons. **Noncredibility of the source** is present when individuals have given out inaccurate information in the past. Individuals who have a history of providing reliable information are considered highly credible senders of messages and get the attention of prospective receivers. Individuals with relatively greater status in an organization have more credibility than those with little or no status.

Noncredibility of the source: A sender who is not believable.

Lack of Communication Skills Poor or a **lack of communication skills** can be attributed to an individual's lack of proper training, educational level, experience, and cognitive capacity, as well as personality traits. Practitioners in the field of criminal justice must master the art of receiving, collecting, recording, and disseminating information. This can be accomplished

Lack of communication skills: Lacking the ability to encode or decode messages, such as poor speaking, listening, or writing skills.

through formal education, academy training, and experience throughout the practitioner's career. A "streetwise" education also is important for developing a full range of communication skills. It is necessary to understand street language and even be fluent in it to achieve maximum delivery of services to clients and the public.

In our changing society, with its influx of legal and illegal immigrants, language barriers often exist between members of a community and governmental agencies. South Florida, Arizona, and California are examples of areas where English is not the first language for many members of society and is not spoken well by many. Also, the rise of diversity in our nation has dramatically increased the numbers of women and minority members of criminal justice agencies. The slight differences in language presentation and levels of sensitivity between ethnic and gender groups can also affect communication skills and become communication barriers on their own (Madera, 2011).

Poor Organizational Climate An organization that promotes openness and trust among its members encourages active communication. Typically, organizations that decentralize decision making include subordinates in higher-order policy decisions and foster risk taking in their members. These strategies will foster a favorable communication climate. Highly formal organizations may discourage all but formal and approved communications among their members, which can result in a **poor organizational climate**. An insistence on formality often promotes an active, informal grapevine that often creates a suitable climate for gossip. Here again, the complexity of verbal and nonverbal communication across ethnic and gender lines can affect the receptiveness of communications and hence the climate.

Poor organizational climate: An organization or social system that discourages or impedes communication.

Use of Complex Channels The more gates through which communication must pass—the **use of complex channels**—makes it more likely that the message will pass slowly and be altered. The highly complex channels of communication characteristic of large, complex organizations make communicating inefficient and ineffective. Such organizations tend to create red tape and usually become rigid because important information cannot be transmitted readily from clients or to policymakers.

Use of complex channels: The more gates a message passes through, the more complex the channels.

Communication Gap These barriers to communication can create a **communication gap**: the difference between the message the sender intended to communicate and what the receiver understands the message to be. The existence of a communication gap between individuals in an organization becomes an organizational problem that impedes effective management and operations.

Communication gap: The difference between the message the sender intended to communicate and what the receiver understands the message to be.

COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

As the discussion of barriers to communication illustrates, simple messages between individuals can be inadvertently filtered or even lost. Moreover, when the individual is a sender or receiver within an organization, additional factors—

organizational climate and complexity of communication channels—can make the communication process even more difficult. Both the formal organizational structure—the chain of command and hierarchy—and the informal social system within the organization affect the organizational climate and the complexity of communication channels.

Chain of Command

Scholars concerned with organizational behavior have pointed out that the innate weakness of the communication process in a large bureaucracy can lead to a weakening of administrative power or to leakage of authority. Downs (1967) describes this phenomenon in depth. Almost all current public administration and management books, especially those written by so-called postmodernists (Miller and Fox, 2006), also raise this issue when discussing communication in organizations. This conclusion is somewhat ironic because the traditional chain of command provides a clear set of communication paths for its members. An agency's policies and procedures, as well as traditionally accepted practices, direct members' official communications rather explicitly. Directives from top management are usually sent down through the chain of command, and subordinates are routinely required to report to superiors. However, each level of a chain of command through which messages must pass can filter and alter information. Each level in a typical agency's hierarchy thus becomes a gate that imposes control over the communication flow.

Messages can be filtered intentionally or unintentionally. Subordinates can intentionally avoid putting forward information that will make them look inept; similarly, supervisors can avoid communicating directives to subordinates that they feel will create problems in productivity or lower their status. Messages may be filtered unintentionally as they pass through the chain of command because of common communication barriers. Memos sent upward or downward through the chain of command may stack up on the desk of a middle manager. Thus, individual efforts at affecting official communication through formal channels can be a challenge rather than a matter of routine.

Kreps (1990) summarizes the process, advantages, and problems of the hierarchical flow of information. *Downward communication* allows executives a clear path to send information downward. It gives organizational members job-related information, job performance review, and indoctrination in recognizing and implementing organizational goals. *Upward communication* provides managers with their primary source of feedback, allows lower-level staff to share information with managers, and can encourage employee participation. Both types of communication, however, have their drawbacks. Downward communication tends to be overused; it is often unclear and can communicate superiors' lack of regard for subordinates. Superiors also tend to distribute contrary and conflicting messages to line personnel. Upward communication by subordinates can also be problematic. It may be risky for subordinates to be truthful with superiors because bosses may not be receptive to criticism. Upward channels of communication are also typically not sufficient to carry messages from all subordinates up the funnel of the hierarchy. We can see how easily the chain of command can break down in terms of communication. For

organizations that depend on the chain of command as the backbone of their structure, a breakdown in that chain of command will weaken the effectiveness of management (Dias and Vaughn, 2006).

Horizontal communication among organizational members at the same level can facilitate task coordination, provide a means of sharing information, provide a formal channel of communication for problem solving, and facilitate mutual support for staff involved. Excessive reliance on horizontal communication can also isolate groups from the hierarchy.

Informal Communication

Because it is cumbersome, the flow of information through formal channels gives rise to the grapevine, or *informal communication*, because formal channels fail to provide an agency's members with sufficient information to satisfy their curiosity or needs. Moreover, literature on community policing shows the difficulty of maintaining hierarchal communication with the more organic structure of a community police division (Clarke, 2006), which gives rise to greater channels of informal communication. Formal organizational rules and hurdles do not encumber informal channels, but information is typically altered as it passes through the gatekeepers of the informal system. Organizational members who are privy to accurate information can derive power and informal leadership status. They can use the information for barter and to influence other organizational members. McCleary (1968), in his classic study, showed that the Hawaiian prison system lost control to younger inmates when older inmates who ran the institution lost their power after being denied access to information from the warden's office. The following sections in this chapter discuss networking, information exchange, and Likert's **linking pin** theory of organizational effectiveness (1967), all of which rely on informal channels of communication.

Linking pin: Individual who is a member of two or more work networks and who coordinates efforts among the work groups.

Organizational Rules for Communication

Every organization has a set of rules for communication that may be spelled out clearly in written policies and procedures. *Exclusionary rules* in criminal trials dictate the admission of evidence into court proceedings and prohibit the communication of evidence that has been obtained in ways that are considered illegal. In effect, this purposeful communication barrier sometimes creates a difference between "real" facts and "legal" facts—facts that can be presented in a court. Chapper (1983) suggests the efficiency of the civil appeals process could be increased by changing the rules and requiring oral rather than written arguments in specific cases. Because the present format of instructions inadvertently restricts most juries by limiting their decision alternatives, Craig (1983) argues that juries can be more flexible in their findings if the instructions from the judge are altered so that juries have more discretion. Katzev and Wishart (1985) discuss methods of judicial instruction to jurors to avoid false testimony of eyewitnesses. The 9/11 Commission (2003) confronted well-vested organizational rules of intelligence agencies that prevented agencies from sharing information. Their recommendation strongly urged

intelligence agencies to, in effect, change that traditional rule and share information to work together to confront the current terrorist threat.

In hierarchical organizations, subordinates are typically required to give particular information to their supervisors, and supervisors are expected to provide direct instruction and guidance to their subordinates. Routine reports that discuss production status, arrest rates, and violation of the rules by inmates are often required. Traditional practices can pass on unwritten rules. It is usually unacceptable for a supervisor to chastise a subordinate who is not directly under that supervisor. Standard courtesies, such as calling a superior by title, also fall into this category (Cushman and Whiting, 1972). In addition to well-established and explicit communication procedures and protocols, rules may be subtle and based on the organization's social system. "Informal rules that exist within the organization, e.g., rules governing when to meet face-to-face rather than send a memo, or which topics are appropriate and which are not" are far more common than formal rules (Farace, Monge, and Russell, 1977:134). Communication rules can be *content rules* that govern standard word usage or consensus on the name of a concept, or *procedural rules* that deal with the actual ways that interactions take place. New members of an organization typically learn communication rules through trial and error or informal training (Farace, Monge, and Russell, 1977). Failure to understand or conform to these rules impedes successful communication. In a complex system, such as the criminal justice system that comprises many interacting agencies and diverse work environments, members face a complicated and diverse set of communication rules (Littlejohn and Foss, 2005).

Informal Communication Networks

Networks are social structures that evolve by repeated communication among individuals and groups within organizations. Since organizational members communicate in patterns, clusters—or networks—of individuals begin to communicate with continued frequency (Littlejohn and Foss, 2005). Burt (2012) argues that information in organizations gets stuck or trapped within groups or silos, and individuals whose networks span the silos become network brokers and are rewarded socially and materially for brokering information. Every organization has its formal or official structure as well as its informal work groups. Each has its channels of communication, which overlap to some extent. The communication among individuals within and between the official and informal subsystems can be viewed as a communication network. A simple communication network is a social system created by communication between individuals interconnected by continuous patterns of communication (Hellriegel, Slocum, and Woodman, 1995; Stohl, 1995). Networks can be transitional or developed purposefully by organizations (Bolman and Deal, 2003) and are considered formal networks. Whether formal or informal, a communication network can be a production network, an innovation network, or a maintenance network through which members learn about social roles and power relationships and links between work groups (Book et al., 1980). Networks can also be formed and can function through computer communication (Brodeur and Dupont, 2006). Likert (1967), in his classic study of medical organizations, found that organizations with individuals

who communicated across subgroups and thereby linked them together were highly productive.

Individuals may also be part of *kinship networks* within organizations. These social groups are formed more for personal than for professional motives and may not have much to do with the goals of their agency. Such networks, called "old-boy" groups, may be made up of old college friends or people with the same political views or other significant personal similarities (Book et al., 1980). Police and corrections officers often meet socially at a local tavern after their shifts. At these meetings, a great deal of discussion about work-related problems goes on and strengthens the bonds of the group. Entry into a kinship network is typically restricted, and it is difficult for an outsider to be a communicator within this type of network.

In a connected group of organizations like the criminal justice system, the basis for a kinship network can be the uniqueness of one's task role or the prescribed role of the agency itself. Each component of the criminal justice system has different roles: police fight crime; courts protect the rights of the accused and distribute justice; and corrections controls and treats offenders. These differing roles create commonalities for members of each agency. But within each agency, the role is further subdivided. Police do road patrol, walk beats, investigate crimes, and administer the agency. Officers who work on the streets have a great deal in common with each other and much less in common with administrators. Thus, kinship networks form within the criminal justice system as a natural consequence of its differing structures and functions in addition to those factors that typically help develop networks in the workplace. In response to the ongoing terrorist threat, Gil (2006) argues that security networks across agency boundaries should be actively constructed. Moreover, Lippert and O'Connor (2006) point out that private security agencies collect a vast amount of information, and networks between governmental and private intelligence agencies should be constructed. This is in effect what the 9/11 Commission (2003) has recommended.

Nonverbal Communication

Communication theorists consider nonverbal communication an extremely powerful part of the communication process for an organization and its individuals. Nonverbal codes are older, more trusted forms of communication; they are more emotionally powerful, express more universal meaning, and are continuous and natural. They express meaning in and of themselves, modify verbal messages, and regulate the flow of interaction (Trenholm and Jensen, 1992). Police investigators commonly interpret nonverbal communications when they interview and interrogate suspects (Waltman, 1983). However, verbal communication has been studied by scholars at far greater length than nonverbal communication and, as a result, our discussion of nonverbal communication will be brief.

Organizations do not evoke these types of nonverbal communications but, as a matter of course, evoke symbols that are meant to communicate meaning to the public. It is argued the public organizations are especially weak at designing and presenting visual communications such as photos that could capitalize on individuals' abilities to process visual information (Agrawala, Li, and Berthouzoz,

2012). Organizations may intentionally use nonverbal symbols to represent them. Capital punishment is a strikingly clear example of a stand-alone, nonverbal message sent to would-be perpetrators of certain crimes about the potential consequences; in effect, criminal deterrence is premised on the symbolic message evoked through punishment of the criminal offender. On a lower level, police officers wear distinct uniforms and carry guns to make an authoritative statement. Judges wear black robes and sit at an elevated bench to set them apart from and above everyone else involved in the process.

Nonverbal symbols evoked by individuals may stand on their own but are usually integrated with verbal messages. For individuals, nonverbal communication includes facial expressions, such as one's body posture during a conversation or interview, and touching techniques such as shaking hands and patting another on the back. Facial expressions may convey fear, friendship, or deceit. Eye contact is another nonverbal form of communication, the appropriateness of which is culturally based (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2006). Messages may also be conveyed through dress, hairstyle, tone of voice, or actions (Book et al., 1980). Reading nonverbal messages is an important part of interviews, interrogations, and even polygraph exams (Inbau, Reid, and Buckley, 1986). Again, using nonverbal messages that are congruent with verbal messages or the substance of the intended message is important for clear communication.

Nonverbal messages can be sent by one's actions or failure to act. Nonverbal behaviors of administrators may send messages that describe the agency, messages that may be congruent or incongruent with the organization's written or stated purposes or philosophy. Criminal justice administrators who give the appearance of being corrupt or inept may reduce the credibility of their agency's stated purposes. Internally, bosses who advocate participative management but pay no attention to feedback from subordinates send a nonverbal message that is incongruent with their stated message. Conversely, the recipient of nonverbal symbols needs to understand the sender's nonverbal repertoire to decode a message accurately. Limited understanding of nonverbal codes can thus pose an additional communication barrier. It is important to understand nonverbal communication for one to be an effective listener.

The use of memoranda, e-mail, phone contacts, texting, and so forth eliminates face-to-face communication and the visibility of nonverbal cues. Face-to-face conversation has likely dropped dramatically with the increased availability of such technology. But direct interpersonal communication remains the mainstream of human and organizational communication. Person-to-person discussions take place in structured settings, such as training sessions, staff meetings, roll call meetings, and so forth. However, most face-to-face communication takes place through continuous discussions throughout the workday between peers and immediate subordinates and superiors. Mengas and Martin (2008) suggest that face-to-face communication is central for passing and sharing organizational knowledge; however, most communication rules for face-to-face communication are implicit, making conversations highly flexible and creating a degree of chaos. To the extent this is true, understanding nonverbal cues becomes more crucial in promoting effective communication.

Information and Communication

The terms *communication* and *information* are often interchangeable. However, they are distinguishable concepts if we think of communication as the process of passing on information. In other words, information is the substance that we attempt to share through symbols in communication. Intelligence in policing and security is a form of information that is collected and communicated for law enforcement purposes (*Policing and Society*, 2006). Communication becomes, then, the exchange of symbols that represent the information. Borrowing freely from Farace, Monge, and Russell (1977), we will look briefly at the relationship between information and communication, considering such factors as communication load; absolute versus **distributed information**; and environmental, motivational, and instructional information.

Distributed information: An idea, data, or information that is distributed throughout a system.

Communication load: Rate and complexity of communication inputs.

Communication Load **Communication load** is the rate and complexity of communication inputs to an individual. Rate is the number of pieces of information that are received and resolved per time period. Complexity is the number of judgments that must be made or factors that must be taken into account while communicating. *Overload* occurs when the flow of messages exceeds an individual's or system's capacity to process them. Brodeur and Dupont (2006) suggest that the amount of data police deal with may be overwhelming. Further, the intake of information will increase exponentially in the future and cause a classic information overload. In addition, the efficiency and speed of communication have improved exponentially with computerized information systems, and the distance we can now communicate has become almost unlimited. However, the amount and speed of information we can transmit can cause serious information-overload problems.

There are three major determinants of load for an individual or system. First is the environment. A stable and predictable environment provides a less complex set of messages than does an unstable environment. In addition, the extent to which a person or system depends on elements in the environment affects the input of messages. In intelligence work, information flows from a number of sources, including informants who may not be reliable (Brodeur and Dupont, 2006). Second, the capacity of the individual or system to assimilate messages plays a key role in determining overload. Third, the individual's or system's desire for information affects information load. Computer technology can greatly increase the criminal justice system's capability to collect and store information, thereby expanding the communication load at the input end (Hinduja, 2006). However, because the ability to process and utilize the information is a function of organizational intellect, not of computer technology, an information overload may be created.

These three determinants of communication load affect the management of information and communication within an organization. Criminal justice agencies, structured along traditional bureaucratic lines, provide stable working environments even though a great deal of uncertainty exists within those environments. At the same time, limited resources and old habits help keep criminal justice agencies from being able to process information efficiently.

Absolute vs. Distributed Information **Absolute information** is an idea or piece of knowledge expressed in recognized symbolic terms. *Distributed information* is an idea or piece of knowledge that is dispersed throughout a system: "What is known in an organization and who knows it are obviously very important in determining the overall function of an organization" (Farace, Monge, and Russell, 1977:27). In criminal justice organizations, information is often tucked nicely into a policy and procedures manual that no one reads. As we have seen from the 9/11 Commission Report (2003), information is often kept within the boundaries of an intelligence agency and not distributed. The rationale for training is, in part, to assure the distribution of absolute information.

Absolute information: An idea, data, or information expressed in a recognizable symbol.

Forms of Information Information takes on three forms that are important for the well-being of an organization or its members. First, information can be environmental—that is, it describes the environment that surrounds the organization or its members; recipients of the communication are getting information that describes actions, events, constraints, or processes in the world in which the individuals exist. Corrections officers are instructed that inmates must be given due process before being punished for an infraction of a prison rule. Lawyers, judges, and prosecuting attorneys often learn the rules of their environment from information they get as a result of practice and experience.

Second, motivational communications provide information about organizational or personal goals or values. Corrections officers may dislike the fact that inmates must have a hearing before they can be punished for violating a prison rule. Therefore, officers must be told that they will be held accountable for punishing inmates without giving them the benefit of a hearing. Or they may be sold the idea that giving inmates a hearing will increase the system's credibility with inmates and make their job easier. Community police officers may get information about the social good and intrinsic rewards that will result from their efforts. Motivating listeners in education and training is important because interest in materials presented and retaining the information are related (Mazer, 2013).

Third, instructional information, or communication, tells individuals how to proceed or what course of action to take to reach a goal. Continuing with our example, corrections officers must receive instructions about how a hearing will proceed and what their role is in it. Police must learn about procedural law in order to bring a case to trial. Judges learn—and relearn—the rules that apply to court proceedings. Simply stated, individuals in an organization must be provided with information about the environment, expectations, and how to perform their roles in it. Cogent communication on these three topics is, therefore, the most basic step of policy and program implementation and the basis of training in organizations.

COMMUNICATION ROLES FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE PRACTITIONERS

In this section, we briefly discuss communication networks in the criminal justice system. A network is a group of individuals who are connected over some time period by purposeful communication that is common to all members. A network

is dynamic rather than static because members may enter or leave the network system.

Corrections officers in a large prison may be part of four or five networks simultaneously. They are part of the formal network—the chain of command—by decree. Also, as the literature has established, experienced officers build working relationships with older stable inmate leaders (Stinchcomb, 2005). Because of the high turnover rate, corrections officers who remain for any length of time probably have formed an old-boy network that includes both officers and inmate leaders. Officers may also be active union members, thus making up a part of that network. An officer respected by the administrative staff may further be a member of the organization's dominant coalition. These networks are not mutually exclusive but they overlap. Where these subsets of networks merge, another network is created with membership from all subsets.

We do not wish to imply that corrections officers are the only focal point of networking in a corrections system. Middle managers may network with those above and below them in the agency's hierarchy. Top managers may network with community members or political figures. Figure 4.2 diagrams the interlocking of the networks just described. Current proposals argue that networks need to be built among intelligence agencies (Brodeur and Dupont, 2006) and between private security firms and public intelligence agencies (Gil, 2006). The street police officer may be the focal point of an even more diverse subset of networks (Gaines et al., 2003); Figure 4.3 explores the possible links. Prosecuting attorneys may be the focus of the network shown in Figure 4.4. To meet the

FIGURE 4.2 Multiple Networks for Prison Corrections Officers.

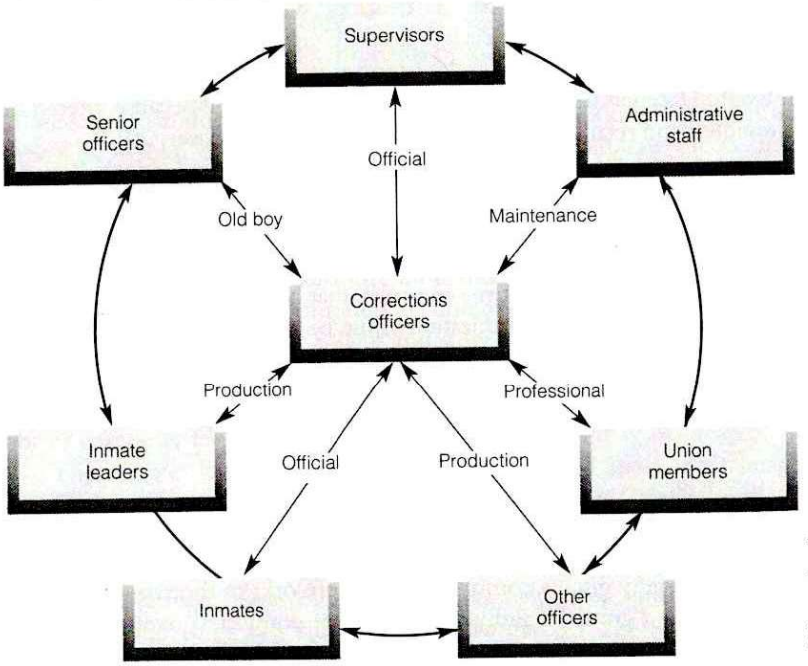


FIGURE 4.3 Multiple Networks for Line Police Officers.

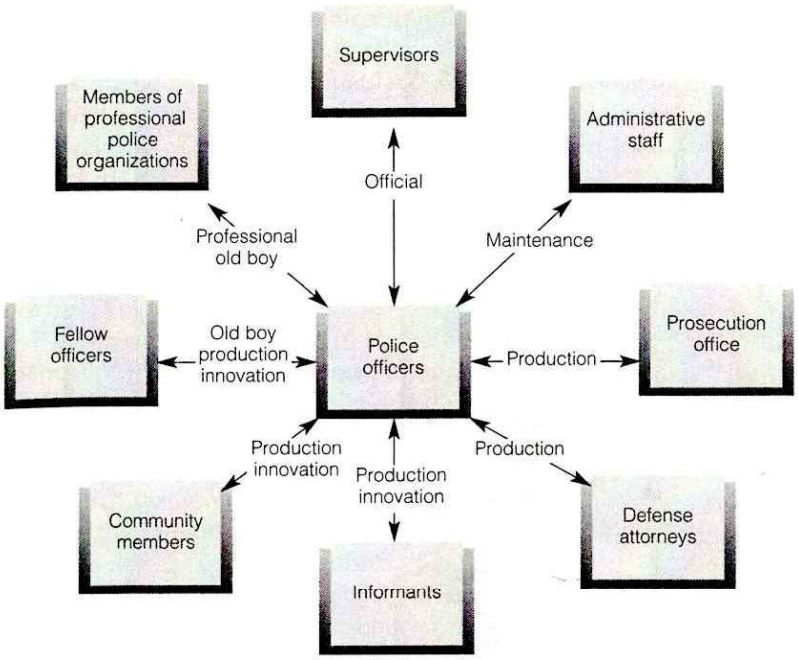


FIGURE 4.4 Multiple Networks for Prosecuting Attorneys.

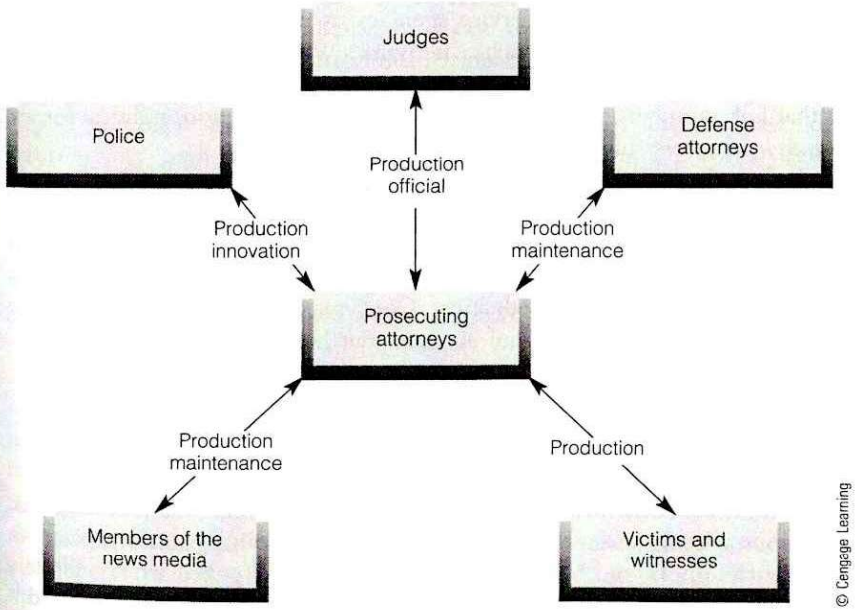
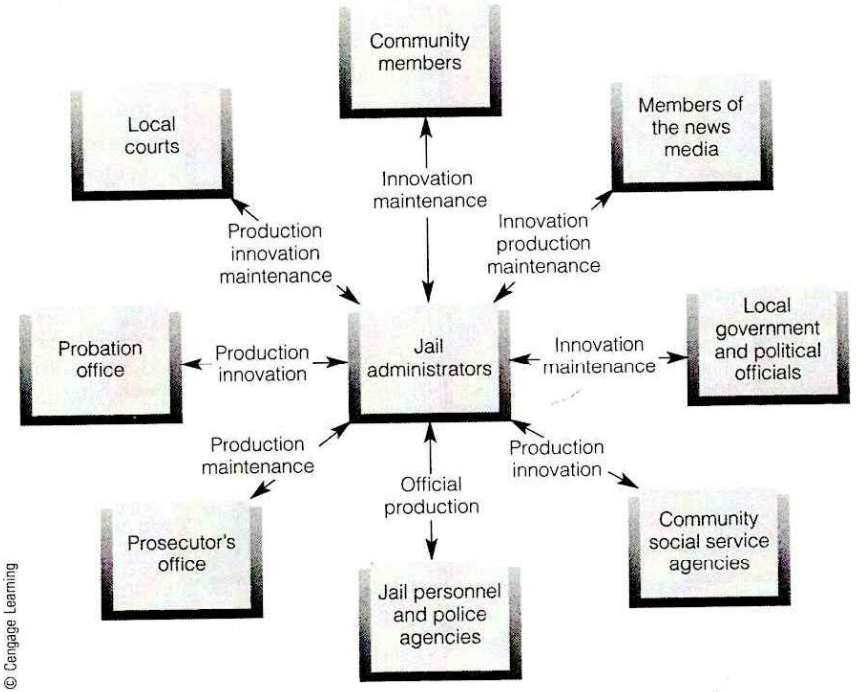


FIGURE 4.5 Multiple Networks for Local and County Jail Administrators.



demands of managing a modern jail, administrators may attempt to build a network that includes jail personnel, local courts, probation departments, police agencies, and community social service agencies, as well as key members of the community. Figure 4.5 depicts such a network. We could continue to design hypothetical networks within and across criminal justice agencies, as well as networks that link members of criminal justice systems to exogenous political forces, community members, and public and private agencies.

Both formal and informal communication networks must focus ultimately on results and productivity for efficient operations. However, rather than nurturing productive informal networks, bureaucracies expend resources to thwart their development in an effort to protect hierarchical authority. Such quasi-military efforts are naive and counterproductive. Concepts such as team policing are implicitly based on networking, but agencies put little effort into the development of informal networks with such a focus.

Barriers to communication: Personal, psychological, or emotional conditions of a receiver of communication that prevent him or her from decoding the message accurately.

Communication Barriers

More pronounced **communication barriers** exist in the criminal justice system than in other systems because criminal justice historically has been organized so that its agencies check and balance each other. In theory, police arrest offenders whom they view as probably guilty, whereas the court system assumes the

offender innocent until proven guilty. Although plea bargaining makes this proposition questionable, conflicts in roles and priorities do exist between police and court personnel. The conflicts become even more pronounced in the interactions among police, prosecutors, and defense attorneys. The murky role of corrections, including the probation systems of local courts, is often viewed negatively by police, prosecuting attorneys, and even local judges as providing services for convicted offenders.

Communication among criminal justice agencies, in short, is carried out by individuals with different views on how criminal offenders should be treated and processed, as well as on the role and purpose of the criminal justice system. Thus, communication networks that include individuals from different agencies must begin by overcoming preconceived ideas about the treatment of offenders and different perceptions of the role of the criminal justice system in general.

We can see how other communication barriers can become exaggerated because of basic differences in perceptions. If a parole officer suggests to a police officer that many offenders mend their ways, the police officer may be inclined to deny this information and respond that criminals just get more skilled at crime and therefore do not get caught.

The personalized meaning of words and phrases varies from agency to agency. Police have official codes and abbreviations; courts and lawyers rely heavily on legal language; and corrections systems have their own professional jargon relating to the sentencing and processing of offenders. Criminal justice practitioners from any agency should learn the unique languages of other agencies and know how to use them in the proper context for good communication to take place.

At the official level, the motivation for and interest in communicating certain information from one criminal justice agency to another may vary greatly. Police provide evidence on a case to the prosecutor, and after conviction both agencies pass that information on to the corrections system. But they are often reluctant to pass information on to other criminal justice agencies. The police are not open with defense attorneys about a case; defense attorneys by oath do not provide information about a criminal defendant that will harm the defendant; corrections agencies are often reluctant to open their files to police agencies, fearing police will use the information to the detriment of a corrections client. In addition, police agencies with similar functions in the same jurisdiction may not be willing to share information because they view themselves as competitors. Thus, agencies are motivated to conceal information because of their conflicting perceptions of the functions of the criminal justice system. As we see later, however, information is often readily exchanged among agencies and individual practitioners if they are members of networks based on an exchange model. This model provides incentives to trade information that ordinarily might be withheld.

It is easy to understand how the conflicting roles of criminal justice agencies and the differing perceptions of their practitioners can create an organizational climate that is not conducive to ongoing and open communication. Clearly, the credibility of a communicator from another agency or even within one's

own agency can be suspect, and therefore trust and some degree of confidentiality are required for an organization to function (Brodeur and Dupont, 2006). Another mitigating factor is the complexity of formal communication channels in the criminal justice system. Large criminal justice organizations and their component agencies have many hierarchical levels, many specialized subunits, and much isolation of members from one another. Channels of communication in such an organization will be much more complex than those in a smaller criminal justice organization.

Besides communicating with others in the criminal justice system, practitioners may come into contact with victims, suspected or convicted offenders, witnesses, members of public interest groups, news media representatives, employees of public social service agencies and private security companies, and even elected officials. These individuals have differing values, nonverbal codes, subgroup languages with personalized meanings, motivations for and degrees of interest in entering into communication, and communication rules and styles. Barriers to communication will be different for each set of individuals the criminal justice practitioner must deal with, and these barriers can confound the communication process with harsh regularity.

DEVELOPING INFORMAL COMMUNICATION NETWORKS

We have suggested that communication networks are important for efficient and effective operations in criminal justice agencies. Informal networks within and among agencies evolve in the search for efficient methods to achieve the goals of the system. These networks are often based on one of two principles: exchange theory or linking pins.

Exchange Theory

The basis of *exchange theory* is relatively simple: Worker A assists Worker B, and B pays for the assistance by helping A in some way. This shared assistance may be in the form of effort or labor, but typically it is information or help in cutting bureaucratic red tape. The exchange is based on bargaining among practitioners in the criminal justice system over time and is a product of the social system in which it functions (Marsden, 1981). Exchanges may be random or *ad hoc*. It is common, however, for exchange systems to be somewhat stable and to include a cadre of participants who link up with peripheral members when appropriate.

Exchange networks exist for several reasons. First, large bureaucratic systems tend to pass on work and information slowly, requiring a relatively high number of transactions. By forming exchange networks that circumvent the formal structure, workers can economize on effort, time, and resources by cutting down the number of transactions (Williamson, 1981). In effect, through exchange systems, the work of the organization can be done with relative efficiency.

Second, the rules that govern practitioners' work efforts and territories are not rigid, and an individual worker may shift resources, efforts, and priorities

for some external motivation or reward. In an exchange network, the reward may be an implied promise of extra effort from the recipient in the near future. Police officers may forward information to parole officers on the conduct of parolees if the parole officers will reciprocate. The information may be exchanged by phone or over lunch rather than through formal communication links.

Work Perspective: INTERORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION GOES LACKING

In the post-9/11 world, communication between agencies has been dramatically overhauled, yet as local, county, state, and federal agencies become more reliant on each other to accomplish their part in what is billed as *Homeland Security*, it is important to understand the intended *need* for communication as much as the transmitted *words* for the communication.

In the not-too-distant past, federal agencies were often perceived to be one-way streets of information; we received it, but rarely shared it with our local, county, or state counterparts. The perception was not that different from the reality. We might have *appeared* to be open in our communication, and we might often have publicly touted the high level of cooperation with the local agency, but nothing was released to an outside agency before it was discussed in depth with our headquarters staff. That practice was especially true of other federal agencies that were perceived to be encroaching on local jurisdictions. There is no question that this organizational value to "filter" information actually slowed things down. In short, every agency has a mission, vision, and an untold number of values that they embed in the directives, policies, and guidelines issued to the field personnel. The mission and vision are often clearly stated, succinct pieces of verbiage that can be found in almost every corner of the agency and can often be found neatly framed in the entryway to an office. On the other hand, the values of an organization are often not as clear or succinct and individual members are free to bring their values to the workplace.

The drug war is a perfect example. Agencies at every level have a stake in stemming the flow of illegal drugs before they hit the streets. Since the advent of asset sharing, the stakes are high. An agency that intercepts a significant load of narcotics, or cash proceeds from narcotics, stands to benefit financially and therefore be better able to equip their personnel with equipment, overtime compensation, or even additional troops that could otherwise not be afforded. Additionally, the media attention drawn to such cases is also worth noting because it produces in the public view the perception that the agency is at the forefront of the battle and thus deserving of more tax dollars.

Two federal agencies that share narcotics jurisdiction are the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the former U.S. Customs Office of Enforcement, now known as the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). One example of interagency lack of communication occurred when both agencies were mandated to share their strategic tactical information and operational plans. If the DEA was using undercover personnel to bring a shipment of drugs into the country, that information was to be carefully transmitted to the Customs Office to ensure safe passage of the drugs and agents so that the trail could be established from importation to the street distributors. They were called controlled deliveries. Unfortunately, controlled deliveries often involved large quantities of drugs, money, or even transportation assets that the agents knew might convert eventually to assets that they could later use. So when the time came for information to be shared with Customs or DEA, it was not uncommon that someone might "forget" to make the call to the other agency. After all, a plane could either be converted to government use or to cash that might buy a significant amount of surveillance equipment or similar tactical assets and, in the era of shrinking budgets, the agents in the field grew to learn the fact that "sharing" information equated to less publicity, less equipment, and less money to do the job. What resulted instead from these lapses of mandated protocol were wasted time, seized assets and personnel, and bad relationships at the higher ends of each organization. A typical result occurred one night when the U.S. Customs Office learned of an inbound controlled delivery that had not been communicated from one agency to another. Not wanting to take chances on what could be a rogue operation, customs officials seized a shipment of cocaine, a single-engine aircraft, and arrested DEA undercover personnel, thus effectively terminating the progressive criminal investigation in place by the DEA. Was the outcome preventable? Certainly. Was the seizure justifiable? Certainly, given the lack of transmitted information. Was there much more to be gained if the agencies had worked together more closely? Without question, yes.

SOURCE: Dr. John J. Sullivan, Executive Director, International Center for Leadership and Development (Resident Agent in Charge, Bureau of Customs and Immigration, Ret.).

Third, the exchange of information helps both parties perform their legitimate functions and contributes to the attainment of the overriding goals of the criminal justice system. The system exists for the mutual good of its participants. If participants are seeking legitimate agency goals, it will serve the goals of the criminal justice system (Gaines et al., 2003). "Continued exchange relationships generate a sense of trust between the system's participants, which in turn promote a cooperative attitude that is strengthened by the organization's reward structure" (Cole, 1983:112). The glue that links exchange systems together is communication. Thus, exchange systems become communication networks that enhance the productivity of their members. Because the members' motivation for and interest in communicating are based on self-interest, they are able to overcome the usual communication barriers.

However, exchange networks and informal communication systems are not always created to enhance an organization's efficiency. The traditional agency grapevine may carry false or inaccurate information. Networks may be created to facilitate personal rather than organizational goals. In addition, well-intentioned workers may pursue their own interpretations of their agency's goals in their exchange networks, interpretations that may often be different from those of the system's policymakers, who presumably are attuned to public demands through the political system. And although information may flow freely within a network, members may intentionally or unintentionally withhold crucial information.

The Linking Pin and Communication

Likert (1961) found that productivity in industry was highest in companies that were coordinated by a hierarchy of interlocking groups rather than by a traditional chain of command and its directed policies and procedures. The interlocking groups are bound together by *linking pins*, persons who serve as members of two or more groups or are part of the social system of two or more groups. Linking pins are individuals who make a concerted effort to have credibility and influence in their own units as well as in other units that affect the efficient operation of their units. The linking pin acts as an informal coordinator and communicator, making ad hoc efforts to smooth the workflow between units. We can surmise that the person acting as the linking pin could overcome the barriers of communication between units and probably establish an exchange system between units.

In the prison system, there is always a degree of conflict or mistrust between custody and treatment personnel. Both groups are concerned that their authority over inmates and their ability to perform their assigned tasks will be eroded as a result of the overlap between the groups. This conflict has been resolved to a great extent when a member of one group links the groups into a working relationship. A medical doctor in a large state prison met with an informal leader among custody personnel, and the two individuals set out informal rules and compromises on how the two groups will work together. Likert was a champion of participative management as a means to open communication in organizations. He reasoned that

communication across groups was not possible in hierarchical organizations managed from the top down. However, his study showed that even in hierarchical organizations, individuals can become linking pins and foster communication across groups. It has been common for federal agents to cross agency borders to build working relationships with agents in other agencies in an effort to meet their agency goals. In the past, this linking pin effort has been done informally because it was contrary to their agency's culture and, in some instances, a violation of agency policy. With the current need for intelligence agencies to share information, agency policy should encourage agents to act as linking pins and build working relationships with agents of sister agencies to communicate their operations across agency boundaries.

Productivity and innovation require broad-based networks that can be created by skilled networkers in exchange and linking-pin structures. Granovetter (1983) makes a good argument that having a number of loose ties extends one's information network and the ability to gather information and ideas outside his or her immediate social system. Granovetter's argument is directed at groups that live in chronic poverty and are underemployed. His thesis is that members of poverty cultures have strong ties with their immediate groups at the expense of having a number of weak ties outside the group, where they can learn about economic opportunities. In application to organizations, weak ties need to develop in agencies where tasks are specialized in order to ensure fluid flow of horizontal information.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE MANAGERS

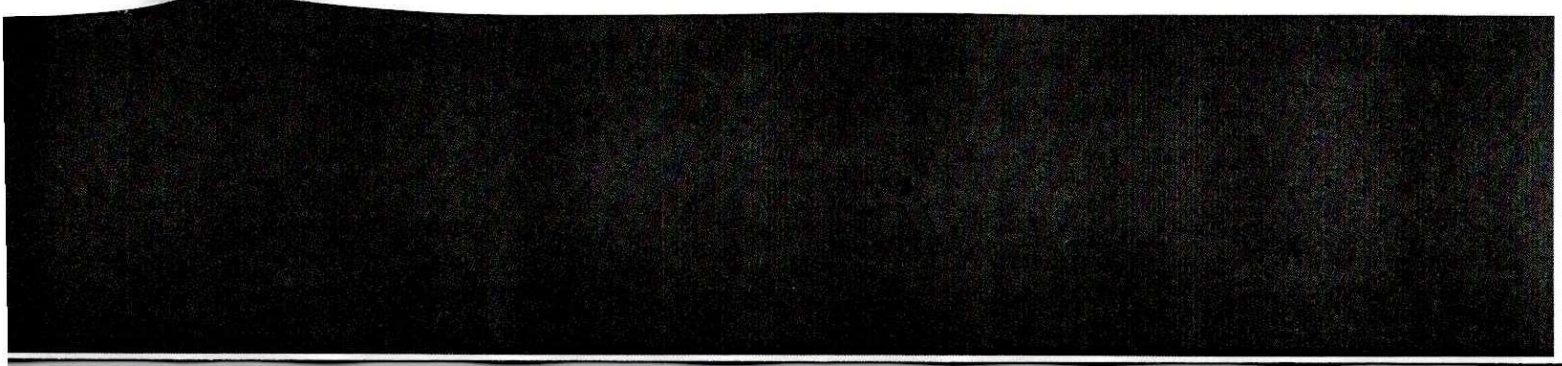
It is clear that effective and efficient communication is crucial for an organization to function. However, communication in all organizations is less than perfect. This is especially true of criminal justice organizations that face multiple and conflicting constituents and a complex and changing environment. Several general areas that criminal justice administrators need to emphasize to improve communications for their organizations are discussed here.

Communication with the Environment

Understanding the importance of **communicating with the external environment** requires a unique perspective. The criminal justice system has inherited the perceived responsibility of providing society with a sense of personal and psychological safety. Society expects crimes to be solved and criminal offenders to be successfully prosecuted and justly punished. Theoretically, prosecuting and punishing offenders will, by example, deter others from criminal activity. This assumption is premised on the notion that the punishment of criminal offenders is communicated to the public (Kohfeld, 1983).

Communicating with the environment: The criminal justice system sends messages to society to create a perception of safety.

However, no systematic efforts exist to communicate clearly to citizens the factual relationship between an offender's crime and his or her punishment. This situation is made more problematic because the punishment of juvenile offenders



is generally kept from public knowledge by the expunging of juvenile records (SEARCH Group, Inc., 1982). Communicating the outcomes of the criminal justice system is left to the media and politicians, who communicate and reinterpret the system's activities to the public, often in a pejorative light, to enhance their own popularity. Administrators need to develop routinized methods of providing useful information to the public and the political system; they must learn to cultivate, not shun, media relations.

Dealing with the public through the news media to produce favorable police–community relations may be fraught with deep and fundamental problems. Selke and Bartoszek (1984) found through surveying criminal justice and journalism students that a great deal of suspicion and distrust exists between the two groups even before they enter the field. Hence, both sender and receiver in the police–media dyad have preconceived notions about the information communicated, and the communicator typically lacks credibility. Building a relationship with the media is a formidable challenge fraught with potential problems, but it must be a major goal of an agency administrator.

In the last decade, forms of systematic communication to the public have been attempted. A major attempt to communicate the problem of crime and encourage citizens to take personal action to protect themselves was a Sears-sponsored public relations program titled "Take a Bite Out of Crime." The campaign utilized the media and provided public service ads that encouraged citizens to take standard precautions to protect themselves from crime. Follow-up studies by the Center for the Study of Mass Communications Research (1982) and by O'Keefe and Mendelsohn (1984) showed that community members had seen or heard the crime prevention ads and were motivated to take some anticrime steps in their communities.

Efforts at developing team and foot patrol policing rely heavily on the interaction and exchange of information between police and community members (Gaines et al., 2003; Trojanowicz and Banas, 1985). Attempts have been made to improve the contacts between police and community members by improving procedures for citizens' complaints against police (Brown, 1983). Scott (1981) suggests that police services and community relations were dramatically improved for a metropolitan police department as a result of a referral system developed by the department to refer citizens who contact police for social service assistance to appropriate agencies. Improved referral systems among metropolitan police departments, the community members who contact the police, and other public service agencies can improve police services and community relations (Scott, 1981). Tullar and Glauser (1985) and Missonellie and D'Angelo (1984) also recommend improved use of technology to strengthen police communications with the public. Over the last decade, law enforcement and correctional agencies have created public information or public relations officers in an attempt to improve media relations and exposure (Motschall and Cao, 2002). Carlson (2005) suggests that police departments form and utilize "citizens academies" to connect with key members of the community by offering them an abbreviated academy experience.

Although technology, referral methods, and so on can be added to systems to improve communication, often a fundamental practice or structure of a police

agency can hamper police–community interactions. Capowich (1998) tracked the communication between community members and local police in a community policing program. He discovered that many of the special police programs aimed at solving community problems were flawed because they were formulated by top administrators based on information received via traditional communication channels, such as dispatch reports and reports through the chain of command. Both traditional organizational procedures tended to reframe the information to fit the traditional organizational paradigm, hence limiting the chance for community members and community police officers to identify and solve local problems.

Relations between corrections and the public can sometimes lead to conflict. In an effort to improve the information flow between corrections and the media, the National Jail Coalition (1984) produced a short manual of briefing reports on complex jail issues. Tully et al. (1982) present recommendations to assist corrections departments with community relations. In the case of a corrections department that is attempting to build a facility in a resistant community, they recommended that speakers from corrections trying to sell these programs know how to communicate with the public and have credibility with them. They should not simply be administrators or public relations people drafted for this purpose (Stinchcomb, 2005).

Victims are often left out of the criminal process, yet they are immediate stakeholders who will evaluate the process and the system. Hagan (1983) suggests that victims need to be made active participants in their cases by being kept abreast of progress and having procedures explained to them. After extensive interviews with 600 victims, Hagan found that those who were kept advised of the progress of their cases and who understood the criminal justice process as it applied to their cases were typically satisfied with the outcome. Conversely, those who were not given information were typically unhappy about the outcome of their cases.

Intraorganizational Communication

The components of the criminal justice system are designed to oppose each other to assure the rights of the criminal defendant. Members of different criminal justice components have differing roles, duties, and perceptions about the purpose and mission of the system. The conflicting roles of criminal justice agencies often cause the day-to-day interaction and communication between practitioners to be adversarial rather than cooperative in nature and intent. Hence, practitioners are not encouraged to communicate cooperatively with professional colleagues not in their agencies.

Nonetheless, administrators and individual practitioners can develop programs and initiatives to improve communication across agencies. When Ryan (1981) examined conflict levels between police and probation officers, he showed that the quality and quantity of contacts between police and probation officers had an impact on their level of conflict. For officers with a great deal of work-related and personal contact, conflict was extremely low. Such contacts

may minimize inaccurate stereotypes and communication barriers between the two groups. Finally, Pindur and Lipiec (1982) found that a system that required continual and immediate contact between arresting police officers and members of the prosecuting attorney's staff improved the relationship between the two agencies.

Communication can be improved within each agency by improving the climate. Nuchia (1983) suggests that law enforcement officers should exercise their own "First Amendment right" to be critical of their departments. Archambeault and Wierman (1983) recommend that police bureaucracies move away from the traditional chain of command to the so-called *theory Z* approach, which encourages teamwork rather than adversarial and competitive relationships among agency staff. Similarly, Melancon (1984) argues that police agencies should institute quality circles, which are similar in concept to theory Z and facilitate the participation of line staff in management. Lippert and O'Conner (2006) suggest that public and private security agencies should share information across boundaries more readily. Dickinson (1984) argues that prisons should radically change communication policies toward inmates and allow them much more contact with the outside world than they now have. Concerning inmate rehabilitation, Jacks (1984) recommends an eclectic approach for interacting with inmates called *positive therapeutic intervention*. The approach simply requires that corrections staff be trained to be good listeners and pay constant attention to inmates when they discuss their problems. In a similar vein, Cole, Hanson, and Silbert (1982) suggest that the implementation of inmate mediation within a prison system precludes full-blown formal litigation, saves time and resources, and achieves amicable solutions.

Interorganizational Communication

The need for broad-based communication among law enforcement and security agencies at every level of government is imperative for successful counterterrorist strategies to be successful (9/11 Commission, 2003). Interagency communication has taken on a new importance, and agencies will have to alter past practices and policies in order to deal with our current international threat. It is imperative, therefore, that criminal justice agency executives improve communication with sister agencies that function at least within their region in order to share significant intelligence that would serve to prevent terrorism as well as criminal activity.

The 9/11 Commission, arguing for more effective interagency communication and information sharing, proposed the following:

> The application of newly developed scientific technology to the mission of U.S. war fighters and national security decision makers is one of the great success stories of the twentieth century.... But technology produces its best results when an organization has the doctrine, structure, and incentives to exploit it (2003: 127).

The need for better interagency communication became strikingly apparent after the terrorists' attack on the World Trade Center. The Commissio

has suggested that the lack of intelligence sharing between the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) may have led to the success of that attack. The initial response to the Commission's report was to create the Department of Homeland Security, whose initial mission was to find ways to improve communication and intelligence sharing across intelligence-gathering agencies. A product of this effort is the development of Fusion Centers. A Fusion Center is a mechanism for exchanging information and intelligence. The Center's goal is to provide a mechanism for law enforcement and intelligence-gathering agencies to place and retrieve intelligence.

The Centers gather information not only from law enforcement agencies but also from the private sector. The Fusion Center managed by the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Department has developed a partnership with private sector entities referred to as Business Partners against Terrorism (BPAT). As this partnership develops, business agencies are given guidelines, training, and a venue to submit critical information for the Centers. The initial purpose was to prevent terrorists' plots from developing into attacks. However, as the Centers have evolved, intelligence on criminal activity, especially in organized crime and gang activities, is becoming a greater part of the system. To the extent that quality and quantity information on criminal or terrorist threats is now being shared across U.S. law enforcement agency boundaries, traditional barriers to interorganizational communication are being bridged. The European Union (EU) is also a target for terrorism and suffers its share of crime. Hence, the EU is attempting to manage and share critical information through better data collection and analysis. Europol's annual Organized Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA) is completing the collection and analysis. The main thrust is against organized crime, but similar to Fusion Centers, OCTA also attempts to include private sector and academic sources (Harfield, 2008).

COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

The efficiency of communication has dramatically increased with the development of information technology. The Internet is a global interconnection of computers operating independently (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2006). The Internet connects business, governmental and private agencies, and individuals across the globe through personal computers, mainframes, and supercomputers. One individual can communicate with a host of individuals or firms with the click of a button. Also, individuals can receive an interminable number of messages without being at their computers and retrieve them when convenient. It is also possible to search the Internet for information from an almost infinite number of sources on almost any topic. Police officers can search for warrants and other important information with laptop computers in their cars. Reports can be written on computers, checked for spelling and proper grammar, and sent out instantly to a number of recipients upon completion. The main method of Internet communication is, of course,

e-mail. E-mail can save agencies time and money when used properly. It can also facilitate group work and teamwork by allowing individuals to communicate across great distances in real time.

Computers allow individuals to work from home by being linked to their clients or business through personal computers rather than requiring an office—or even a classroom. This can create a significant savings for agencies because they can meet their objectives in part by allowing individuals to work from their homes.

Computers are great storage bins for reports, files, data, and other information that typically is stored in cumbersome filing cabinets, notebooks, or other traditional means of record storage. In addition to eliminating the need for space to file information, filing can be done with the click of a mouse rather than through the efforts of clerical staff. In spite of all these benefits, however, a disadvantage is that a skilled hacker can break into computer systems and steal information, making security difficult. Most agencies that are concerned with security develop an *intranet* system that can function only within agency parameters. To prevent intruders from breaking the agency's computer communication boundaries, a firewall can be installed. The firewall keeps the agency computers from being accessed by non-agency individuals. However, firewalls can be breached and information stolen. Moreover, we are all familiar with computer viruses created by computer hackers that intrude into a system to destroy programs and records.

Teleconferencing, or videoconferencing, is also a technological advancement that improves the efficiency of communication. Teleconferencing brings individuals in distant cities together with audio and video connections. This allows individuals to hold conferences and staff meetings and conduct interviews at a distance, eliminating the time and cost that would be expended to bring people together on a face-to-face basis. In some jurisdictions, arraignments for criminal defendants are held via teleconferencing between the court and the local jail. This eliminates the cost and time needed to transport inmates from jails to local courts for their arraignments, but it provides the defendant with his or her appearance in court and proper judicial procedures.

There is no guarantee that communicating with computer technology or videoconferencing will improve the effectiveness of communication. We still need to be sharp and thoughtful to effectively use these modern tools. The ease with which e-mails can be sent or data and other records stored may cause information overload. Mid-level administrators in a state correctional agency reported that administrators were calling staff meetings several times a week with teleconferencing rather than monthly as had been the practice in the past because of the ease with which such meetings could be set up. The meetings tended to be poorly planned, and the information provided often contradicted information from the previous meeting, depending on who called the meeting.

It is easy to conclude that productivity in organizations is linked to good communications. If individuals within and among organizations communicate

poorly, they will find it difficult to coordinate their work and link their tasks. If directives and orders are communicated ineffectively, programs, plans, and changes in routine tasks are hard to implement. Managers and practitioners would agree on this conclusion, at least in principle, and so does current research (Hinduja, 2006). Therefore, managers and practitioners in criminal justice agencies should actively seek to improve communication channels and individual communication skills. Typically, the task of improving communication is ignored or is relegated to occasional training seminars that do not teach communication skills in the context of the organization.

To the extent that formal training in communication is provided, it focuses on law, agency rules and protocol, chain of command, and other formal aspects of communication. Report writing may be offered to new recruits, but comprehensive training in interpersonal communications is not a common part of training agendas. Some criminal justice agencies, however, do offer training in communication for their professionals. The Michigan Department of Corrections provides extensive human relations training for its corrections officers, who are taught how to recognize and deal with communication barriers between staff and inmates and about the psychological games some inmates play. They then learn effective communication skills to overcome these barriers and problems.

Communication among members of different components of the system is often limited because of conflicting goals. To the extent that members perceive interagency relationships as more conflicting than negotiative, interagency communication will be limited, formal, and closed rather than informal and open. Agencies can improve interagency communication simply by making clear to their members the situations that involve legitimate goal conflict and those that allow for negotiation and cooperation.

The development of new technology using computers to store and process communication has increased markedly during the last decade (Hinduja, 2006; Kinicki and Kreitner, 2006). A great deal of emphasis is being placed on training computer skills to criminal justice practitioners (James, 1996; Leiberg, 1996; Ricker, 1996; Van Buren, 1996), such as developing the communication skills of police dispatch and emergency services, areas that are in obvious need of technical upgrading. As communication systems become more efficient and can connect individuals and agencies to information from across the globe, information management will become extremely important. The ease of access to information will also make the technical side of confidentiality a new task for managers. The recent exposure of governmental classified documents by Wikileaks shows how vulnerable an agency can be.

Administrators will be forced to deal internally with many of these problems by restructuring or streamlining communication channels and providing training to agency members. Most significant in this regard is the crucial need for intelligence agencies to communicate and share information among agencies rather than hoard intelligence, as has been the past practice. It is just such sharing of information that the 9/11 Commission (2003) concluded is imperative for the nation's defense against terror.

ETHICAL PROBLEMS IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Ethics in organizational communication means that the flow of information from management and between members is valid, reliable, and accessible. In other words, formal transmittals of information need to be considered truthful and consistent rather than manipulative, self-serving, and opaque. A key function of an executive is to take the lead role in managing communication in his or her agency. To function well in this role, executives need to be perceived as having integrity and must send consistent information that has a clear message. First, to succeed in that role takes an understanding of the importance of communication and the agency's communication process—which is commonly taken for granted. Second, this role requires a commitment on the part of executives to create, promote, and protect ethical boundaries for conversation and information sharing in their agencies. Third, executives need to avoid misusing information themselves as a method of control. The temptation to use communication to manipulate perceptions is a constant threat to ethical discourse. This temptation is, unfortunately, an organizational constant. This is true because management and subordinates have different agendas that result in tension between superiors and subordinates. Management seeks high levels of productivity while attempting to control cost and resources expended. Subordinates also want to control their expenditures of time and effort while maximizing their benefits—whether material or symbolic (Reinsch, 1996). The ability of one group to dominate another creates the tension that lies in the power relationship between groups. The temptation for each group is to control communication and information in order to skew perceptions of reality that favor their group's needs.

Control over communication systems and access to information is a major tool of power. A temptation exists on the part of organizational members and executives to use power that feeds their self-interests over the interests of the organization. Previously, we have seen the weakness of hierarchical communication, especially how information leaks as it flows upward and downward through the chain of command. Subordinates try to pass information up the hierarchy that will lead to a favorable evaluation. Managers tend to screen out or reinterpret directives sent to them to protect their self-interests; they can then pass the reinterpreted directives to the next hierarchical level. Directives and reports can also be placed perpetually at the bottom of the "in basket" to keep them out of circulation rather than dealing directly and honestly with issues. Moreover, in this chapter, we have discussed how individuals, and even agencies, treat information as a valuable commodity, an effective bargaining tool. Also, criminal justice agencies and intelligence-gathering agencies may control or hide information from other agencies in order to gain success in critical investigations or major arrests without sharing credit. Solving major crimes, breaking up criminal gangs, and so forth can add to the status of individuals and agencies, which, in turn, can assist the agency with next year's budget requests. In this case, the self-interest of agencies is higher than the interests of the community members they serve.

The nature and content of communication are to some extent framed by the organization's culture. Simply put, what is rewarded gets reported. In that regard, organizational members may be viewed negatively by supervisors for sharing

critical information. In the criminal justice system, staff will be loath to repost information that will put them in a critical light with managers. Conversely, practitioners will be anxious to report information that will make them look good. As we will see in the chapter on effectiveness (Chapter 13), information is often falsified in an attempt to make the agency, as well as agency members, "look good."

Up to this point, we have discussed intentional deceit and manipulation of communication. However, part of the executive's role is to create and maintain an effective communication structure within his or her agency. Management by indifference, carelessness, or insensitivity can lead to unethical communication within an organization. The creation of an old-boys' network, or in-group and out-group cliques, can be as much a matter of careless management as that of ill will. The old-boys' clique is often run by the head good old boy—that is, managers who seek informal input from subordinates may continue to fall back on the same people over time, forming, in effect, the "in group." Relying on the same subgroup of people for input may be due to a willingness to participate or the boss's perception about their veracity, skills, or expertise or because the in-group members usually affirm the ideas of the managers. Whatever the basis for the decision to communicate with a subgroup of staff, the results typically lead to resentment and contention by members left out of the process as well as a mistrust of information put forward by the manager. To maintain ethical formal discourse, managers need to make extraordinary attempts to include everyone. For example, a new warden called a roundtable meeting with his immediate subordinates. Agenda items were laid out. The warden asked each member of the group—one at a time—for input. He took careful notes, summarized them, and passed them back to the subordinates. He then advised his roundtable of subordinates to bring in their immediate subordinates and structure their meeting in the same way. This is not necessarily an extraordinary measure, but it is an unusual and effective measure to avoid the inadvertent creation of the old-boys' communication network.

Finally, it is management's duty to set boundaries and rules for communication. Speech and expression within or among criminal justice agencies is limited. Information on clients, inmates, or evidence may at times be legally confidential. At other times, prudence may require that information be kept confidential, therefore ethically restricting communication. While particular words or terms are a part of any profession, language and terminology that may be offensive or threatening to particular groups need to be avoided in formal and informal discourse and written communication. It is management's obligation to make the contingencies to communicating well known to staff.

SUMMARY

Know the five steps of the communication process.

- The five steps of the communication process include encoding, transmitting, selecting a medium or channel, receiving, and decoding.

Be familiar with the nine barriers to communication.

- The nine barriers to communication include preconceived ideas, denial of contrary information, use of personalized meanings, lack of motivation or interest, noncredibility of source, lack of communication skills, poor organizational climate, use of complex channels, and any communication gap.

Understand how communication and information flow through the agency's chain of command.

- In a hierarchical organization, communication and information flow downward from superior to subordinate and upward from subordinate to superior. In the case of a multileveled chain of command, top managers do not communicate directly with field workers and vice versa. Reports flow upward and directives flow downward. Horizontal communication facilitates coordination.

Understand informal communication networks in the workplace.

- Informal communication networks in the workplace form on their own and for some purpose. Individuals who are part of that network share information with each other and not with workers who are not part of the network.

Understand nonverbal communication.

- Nonverbal communication is part of the message when individuals communicate face to face. Gestures and facial features can reveal honesty or deceit, enthusiasm or boredom, or the extent to which a communication recipient understands the message.

Understand the difference between communication and information.

- Communication and information are often used interchangeably. However, communication is a process that sends a message, and information is the message.

Understand exchange theory and exchange networks.

- When we make a purchase, we exchange money for a product. In an exchange network, members communicate regularly and exchange information for information. Information becomes a commodity similar to a product purchased in exchange for money.

Be able to define linking pin theory.

- Productivity in industry is highest in agencies that are coordinated by interlocking work groups rather than by a chain of command. The groups are bound together by individuals who are members of two or more groups. Linking pin individuals make an effort to be part of more than one group.