COMS 361 – BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

SPRING SEMESTER, 2020

STUDY GUIDE FOR UNIT 5: Reaching Out (Media Studies)

Material from the reading by Dennis et al.

1. Know whether or not **Shannon and Weaver's theory** on communication provides the **foundation** with which the authors identify five capabilities of media, adding **transmission velocity** in lieu of **immediacy of feedback**. Know whether or not, in this age of **digital convergence**, specific media tools **acquire new capabilities** rapidly so that it is no longer appropriate to refer to a specific digital medium but **rather the set of features** that medium offers. Know whether or not the authors argue that regardless of **overall work objectives**, communication (the development of shared understanding) is composed of two primary processes, **conveyance of information** and **convergence on meaning**. Know whether or not **less rich media** (e.g., computer-mediated communication) are best suited to tasks with a **great deal of information**. Know whether or not the MST described in this paper expands on the original by providing a **stronger theoretical basis** for the constructs and relationships that make up the theory. Know whether or not **social information processing theory** (later called social influence theory) argues that media richness is an **objective, physical property** of a medium. Know whether or not, while the physical characteristics of a medium may be **fixed**, users' perceptions of a medium depend upon their **own characteristics and experiences**, which may **change over time**. Know whether or not the authors' approach essentially follows what Putnam et al. call the **"conduit metaphor,"** in which we treat the communication medium as a conduit among participants. Know whether or not the authors believe that shared understanding can be **co-constructed** by the communication participants. Know whether or not **most studies of MRT** have used it to predict **performance**, not **media choice**, or the **other way around**. (p. 575-579)

2. Know whether or not the authors believe that **task** is best thought of in terms of the **fundamental communication processes** that must be performed. Know whether or not sharing information is **inherently an exchange process**, in which developing meaning requires a **dissemination of information** (information transmission) and **individual processing** of that information (information processing). Know whether or not **prior task conceptualizations** are **too broad** to make accurate prescriptions about the **"best" media to use** for improving task performance. Know whether or not **convergence processes** are the discussion of **raw information itself**, not **preprocessed information about each individual's interpretation** of a situation, or the **other way around**. Know whether or not **"task" has been a key element** in the development and testing of media theories. Know whether or not **synchronicity** exists among individuals when they exhibit a **shared pattern of coordinated synchronous behavior** with a **common focus**. Know whether or not conveyance processes **benefit from synchronicity** while convergence processes **do not**. Know whether or not, for conveyance processes, **media lower in synchronicity** will lead to **better communication performance**. Know whether or not **parallelism** is the extent to which signals from multiple senders can be transmitted **over the medium simultaneously**. Know whether or not the **time and effort** required to encode and to decode a message using a specific symbol set **may impose production costs**. Know whether or not some information may be **more precisely encoded and decoded** in one symbol set than another. Know whether or not individuals can **more effectively and efficiently** encode and decode information when the symbol set **matches the needs** of the message. Know whether or not convergence has a **greater need for reprocessability**. Know whether or not high synchronicity is associated with **reduced cognitive effort** to encode and decode messages, yielding **faster message transmissions**, so a message can be **assessed and modified** quickly, even during transmission itself. Know whether or not, based on Shannon and Weaver's theory, the authors believe that **three primary media capabilities** are important in deriving a medium's ability to support information transmission: **transmission velocity**, **parallelism**, and **consistency**. (p. 579-588)

3. Know whether or not **execution** is the set of behaviors **necessary to carry out the goals**. Know whether or not it is possible that individuals may be **familiar with each other**, but be asked to work on a **novel task** or use **unfamiliar media**. Know whether or not, over time, the communication context moves from the **novel to the familiar**. Know whether or not the authors believe that the **best theoretical focus** is on the **overall task as a whole**, not the **communication processes needed**, or the **other way around**. Know whether or not one **overarching task characteristic** that influences communication process needs is the extent to which the task is **additive or conjunctive**. Know whether or not most prior research examining the impact of media on performance tends to use **monolithic conceptualizations** of task. Know whether or not prior research uses **characteristics of media** as identified by MRT to **describe and rank** media and predict performance. Know whether or not future research needs

to address the extent to which media capabilities will actually **be appropriated and used**. Know whether or not communication needs are usually the **same for individuals** working in novel contexts as in familiar contexts. Know whether or not, in **supporting remote workers or virtual teams**, media must be considered in terms of the capabilities they provide since the communication processes needed for a task may **require different media capabilities**. (p. 588-595)

Material from the reading by Gilpin

1. Know whether or not the channels converged on a **core set of terms**, and **overlapped in others**, but each channel also addressed **divergent aspects** of the organization's projected image. Know whether or not scholars have **celebrated** the consistent use of the terms **image and reputation** in the organizational literature. Know whether or not reputation can be **broadly conceptualized** as a combination of **organizational self-presentation**, representations by media and **other third parties**, and **stakeholder perceptions**. Know whether or not **image construction** is seen as the self-presentation processes used to build and maintain a **particular set of perceptions** among **stakeholders** regarding the organization's identity. Know whether or not, although image construction originates from an organization, it is an **inherently social process**, as the organization adapts and responds to **feedback or changes** in the stakeholder environment. Know whether or not the **best known microblogging platform** is currently the online service, **Twitter**. Know whether or not, to date, **no companies** have used Twitter to **communicate directly** with stakeholders. Know whether or not **blogs**, or Web logs, consist of a **chronologically arranged series of articles**, usually allowing reader **comments**, and often using tags to permit **topical searching**. Know whether or not public relations is the organizational area usually responsible for **forging and maintaining stakeholder relationships**. Know whether or not today's online media environment offers other **low-cost means of reaching constituents**, many of which offer the added advantages of **bypassing the mainstream media** and allowing organizations to **engage directly** with stakeholders. (p. 265-269)

2. Know whether or not the fact that relationships are forged and conducted in **public virtual spaces**, often with input from **multiple directions**, can bring a new twist on public relations as **"publicly relating."** Know whether or not the **boundary** between **new and traditional media** is become more distinct and **precisely defined**. Know whether or not, although most new and social media tools are **forms of controlled media**, they introduce new **complicating factors** into the media relations landscape for public relations practitioners. Know whether or not **news releases** are frequently available **directly to stakeholders** through online press rooms and other **electronic forms of distribution**. Know whether or not **social networking media** form a different kind of network structure on the Internet, compared to **traditional media** or other kinds of **Web pages**. Know whether or not the data used for the study included the **news releases**, **blog posts**, and **Twitter messages** issued by Whole Foods during the period studied, from July 1 through December 31, 2008. Know whether or not using a **combination of social and semantic network analysis methods** can provide a **richer portrait** of communication phenomena. Know whether or not the **software package** used for the study's analysis is **Crawdad**. Know whether or not the **first image factor** was labeled **"narrative identity."** Know whether or not the semantic network analysis produced a **clearly recognizable pattern** of differentiated media use. Know whether or not a combined total of **slightly less than 18%** of the total terms were influential in **two of the channels**, leaving the vast majority of terms to **specific channels**. Know whether or not the results indicate a **low level of message differentiation** among the different communication channels, suggesting that each plays a **distinct role** in constructing the organization's image. Know whether or not **network values** are difficult to compare in any meaningful way, because they are **highly dependent on specific context**. Know whether or not **Whole Foods** represents a useful case study for examining emerging image construction processes through a combination of **new and traditional communication channels** represented online. Know whether or not there are two fundamental types of network analysis: **social and semantic**. (p. 269-278)

3. Know whether or not the largest proportion of terms found in **Whole Foods' core image** communications has to do with **reinforcing its corporate identity** as a purveyor of **natural, locally grown and produced foods**. Know whether or not the **most social** of the media channels examined, **Twitter**, contributed **most to the core overall**. Know whether or not, of the three media channels, **Twitter** is the **least intrinsically dialogic**. Know whether or not **Twitter** can be used as a **simple broadcasting medium**. Know whether or not, because blogs typically allow **space for reader comments**, and this study focused on self-presentation, **blog comments were included** in the analysis. Know whether or not the blog author occupies a **privileged position** in shaping the ensuing discussion, whether or not this privilege is **leveraged in practice**. Know whether or not the **key terms specific to the blog** were almost entirely related to **recipes and product-based information**. Know whether or not the findings illustrate that **different online and social media channels** can and are being used to construct an organization's image online from a **range of perspectives**, to both reach and interact with **multiple stakeholder groups**. Know whether or not Whole Foods **lacks a strong central identity** to communicate across online media. Know whether or not Whole

Foods has been a **visible proponent** of **sustainable food practices** and **reliance on local food sources**. (p. 278-283)

4. Know whether or not **social media tools** such as blogs and, especially, microblogging pose **challenges to practitioners** who are used to the **more controlled medium** of the news release. Know whether or not the changing nature of the **mediascape** requires public relations theory and practice to **adapt accordingly**. Know whether or not, in this study, **reputation**, as a whole, is seen as a system consisting of a **mixed social and semantic network**. Know whether or not the **multitiered, overlapping patterns** of image construction suggest that today's communication media should be viewed according to the **standard binary classification** of **controlled and uncontrolled media**, rather than along a **continuum of relative degrees of organizational control**. Know whether or not **more dialogic channels** show a **lower degree of differentiation** from the core set of terms, indicating responses to stakeholder input. (p. 284-285)

Material from the reading by Rice

1. Know whether or not, in some of **Hiltz et al.'s work**, attitudes toward new media appear **fairly stable across time**, even comparing **preimplementation to postimplementation attitudes**, regardless of changes in usage. Know whether or not **social information processing theory** would argue that there are at least **two primary organizational sources** of social information about **contextual or ambiguous phenomena**, such as media characteristics: **job position** and **communication networks**. Know whether or not, as one's job position is **higher in the organization**, members will be involved in **less task ambiguity**. Know whether or not **perceptions of media appropriateness** should differ across job positions and be more similar within job positions because **occupants of similar job positions** use similar media for similar tasks and have **similar job norms and experiences**. Know whether or not **social presence** depends only on the **words conveyed**. Know whether or not **social presence** is fundamentally related to **three social psychology concepts**: **intimacy**, **immediacy**, and **intensity**. Know whether or not social presence is the degree to which a **medium is perceived** as conveying the **presence of the communicating participants**. Know whether or not social presence **remains the same** between different media. Know whether or not **media richness scales** have involved much **more empirical evaluation**. Know whether or not individuals have to be **aware of such a concept**, or **intentionally select media**, in order for the **media-task match** to have an effect. Know whether or not **face-to-face** communication is **ranked lowest** in social presence. Know whether or not the reported research focuses on a **few primary media characteristics** associated with **two related theories**: **social presence** and **media richness**. Know whether or not **Daft and Lengel**, and **Trevino et al.**, developed the concept of media richness (apparently **without awareness** of the earlier social presence research). Know whether or not those who are more aware of a medium's social presence may well **choose more appropriate media** and experience somewhat better communication or work performance. (p. 445-454)

2. Know whether or not this study uses data from **six prior studies**, all intended to analyze **use and effects** of new media but with **slightly differing** goals, situations, and thus measures. Know whether or not, for the **CHEM site**, self-reported usage was measured by the **percentage** of the day spent **using electronic mail**. Know whether or not, for each site, the **job positions** were identified for respondents either through **questionnaires or archival records**. Know whether or not, for the **INS site**, self-reported usage was measured by the **total voice messages sent and received** per average business day. Know whether or not the researched **first site (R&D1)** was a technical **research and development** organization. Know whether or not **face** was **ranked first** for all activities except for **staying in touch** and exchanging **time-sensitive information**, for which the **telephone was most appropriate**. Know whether or not, as the first dimension explained the **bulk of the variance**, and the **eigenvalue** of the second dimension was just **slightly over 1.0**, it can be argued that, **averaged over these six sites**, media appropriateness is **unidimensional**. Know whether or not there was **considerable inconsistency** in how media were perceived across **multiple sites**. Know whether or not almost all of the **scale correlations** were significant. Know whether or not, in the **GOVT organization**, the **civil servants** were mostly **clerical workers**, although some were **white-collar professionals**. Know whether or not the **overall appropriateness rankings** of media were electronic mail, face-to-face, telephone arid meetings, desktop video, voice mail, and text. Know whether or not the two media that have the **highest social presence or media richness**—**face** and **meeting**—do not change in **perceived appropriateness**. Know whether or not only those who might be **most impressionable** early on (interns) were influenced (slightly) about the **most ambiguous medium** (desktop video) and more through the subset of those communicating over the **new medium itself** than through the **general work and social networks**. Know whether or not most of the traditional **media cluster** separately among themselves (face-to-face, meetings, text, and phone), whereas the **new media cluster** together, with some instances of **text and phone**. Know whether or not the identified factors represent the two fundamental dimensions: **information exchange** (less equivocal) and **socioemotional relations** (more equivocal). Know whether or not **means and rankings** indicate that the **appropriateness scale** is capturing enough of the ability of email to overcome situational constraints or even support socioemotional content. Know whether or not **social presence theory** (and, to the extent that it makes similar claims, media richness theory), as

indicated by the media appropriateness scale and subscales, appears to provide a **useful, consistent, meaningful, stable, and discriminating way** to characterize media. Know whether or not one contribution of this study is **identifying one way** to establish **cross-organizational and cross-media** measurement and conceptual consistency in analyses of new media. Know whether or not the concept of media appropriateness across **generic organizational communication activities** provides one way to understand how new media **augment, substitute, and complement** traditional media. Know whether or not there is **considerable empirical validation** of the media richness construct. (p. 455-481)