

Summary Notes on:

- Contingency Theories
- Enactment Theory
- Media Richness Theory
- Network Theory and Analysis
- Sensemaking
- Structurational Theory

Contingency Theory

- Wiio and Goldhaber (1993) concluded that differences in communication effectiveness are a function both of the **type of organization** and **composition of work force** (age, sex, education, tenure).
- The communication process is contingent [dependent] upon:
 - External Stimuli: economic, technological, legal, sociopolitical, cultural and environmental contingencies
 - Internal: structural contingencies, output, demographic, spatiotemporal and traditional contingencies
- 2. The degree of freedom or organizational constraints
- Wiio stated “**In different organizational contingencies, different demographic variables showed significant relationships with communication variables.**” (p. 93).

Goldhaber, G.M. (1993). *Organizational communication*. Sixth edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47DHRWX5W6E>

Contingency theory of leadership

- The success of the leader is a function of various contingencies in the form of subordinate, task, and/or group variables.
- The effectiveness of a given pattern of leader behavior is contingent upon the demands imposed by the situation.
- These theories stress using different styles of leadership appropriate to the needs created by different organizational situations. No single contingency theory has been postulated. Some of the theories are:
 - **Fiedler's contingency theory:** is the earliest and most extensively researched. Fiedler's approach departs from trait and behavioral models by asserting that group performance is contingent on the leader's psychological orientation and on three contextual variables: group atmosphere, task structure, and leader's power position.
 - **Hersey & Blanchard's situational theory:** is an extension of Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid Model and Reddin's 3-D management style theory. With this model came the expansion of the notion of relationship and task dimensions to leadership and adds a readiness dimension.

Contingency theory of decision making

Vroom and Yetton's **decision participation contingency** theory or the **Normative decision theory**

- The effectiveness of a decision procedure depends upon a number of aspects of the situation:
 - the importance of the decision quality and acceptance;
 - the amount of relevant information possessed by the leader and subordinates;
 - the likelihood that subordinates will accept an autocratic decision or cooperate in trying to make a good decision if allowed to participate;
 - the amount of disagreement among subordinates with respect to their preferred alternatives.

Vroom, V.H., & Jago, A.G. (1988). *The new leadership: Managing participation in organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall

Smith's Contingency rules theory

- is an example of a rules approach to persuasion.
- utilizes the idea of cognitive schemas, expectations about the attributes that a given person or policy will have or expectancies about the consequences of behaving in a particular manner. These schemata function as contingency rules that both shape the way something is viewed and structure behavior.
- Smith suggests that rules and schemata explain persuasion better than the traditional concept of attitude.
- “Rules are used to create responses to persuasive messages”
 - Self-evaluative rules are associated with our self-concept and our image.
 - Adaptive rules are those that will apply effectively in a particular situation – the rules most likely to generate a positive outcome.
 - Behavioral contingency rules are contextual. In some situations, certain consequences are considered and certain rules are activated which guide behavior. In other situations, other rules are activated. External threats and rewards are meaningful only if they apply to one's personal goals.

Enactment Theory

- **Weick (1988) the notion that: "when people act they bring structures and events into existence and set them in action."**
- **It is in the context of 'sensemaking' by managers or employees.**
- **describes how they can enact 'limitations' upon the system to avoid issues or experiences.**
- **It is also seen as a form of social construction.**
- **To date enactment is related to organizations and their environment and strategic management.**
- **Examples:**
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7oz366X0-8&list=PL69DBB85B1E25E336>
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mqNcs8mp74>

Social Media Richness Theory

- Researchers Daft, Lengel and successors propose that communication media have varying capacities for resolving ambiguity, negotiating varying interpretations, and facilitating understanding.

Two main assumptions of this theory are:

- people want to overcome equivocality and uncertainty in organizations and a variety of media commonly used in organizations work better for certain tasks than others.
- Using four criteria, Daft and Lengel present a media richness hierarchy, arranged from high to low degrees of richness, to illustrate the capacity of media types to process ambiguous communication in organizations. The criteria are:
 - (a) the availability of instant feedback;
 - (b) the capacity of the medium to transmit multiple cues such as body language, voice tone, and inflection;
 - (c) the use of natural language; and
 - (d) the personal focus of the medium. Face-to-face communication is the richest communication medium in the hierarchy followed by telephone, electronic mail, letter, note, memo, special report, and finally, flier and bulletin.
- From a strategic management perspective, the media richness theory suggests that effective managers make rational choices matching a particular communication medium to a specific task or objective and to the degree of richness required by that task (Trevino, Daft, & Lengel, 1990, in Soy, 2001).

Media Rating (across) Criteria(down)	High	Medium	Low
Feedback	Face to Face Video Conferencing Synchronous Audio Text Based Chat		E-mail Threaded Discussion Asynchronous Audio
Multiple cues	Face to Face	Video Conferencing	Synchronous Audio Asynchronous Audio Text Based Chat E-mail Threaded Discussion
Message Tailoring	Face to Face	Video Conferencing Synchronous Audio E-mail	Text Based Chat Asynchronous Audio Threaded Discussion
Emotions	Face to Face	Video Conferencing Synchronous Audio Asynchronous Audio	Text Based Chat E-mail Threaded Discussion

Table from: Newberry. (2001). Raising Student Social Presence In Online Classes. WebNet 2001 Proceedings (In Press)

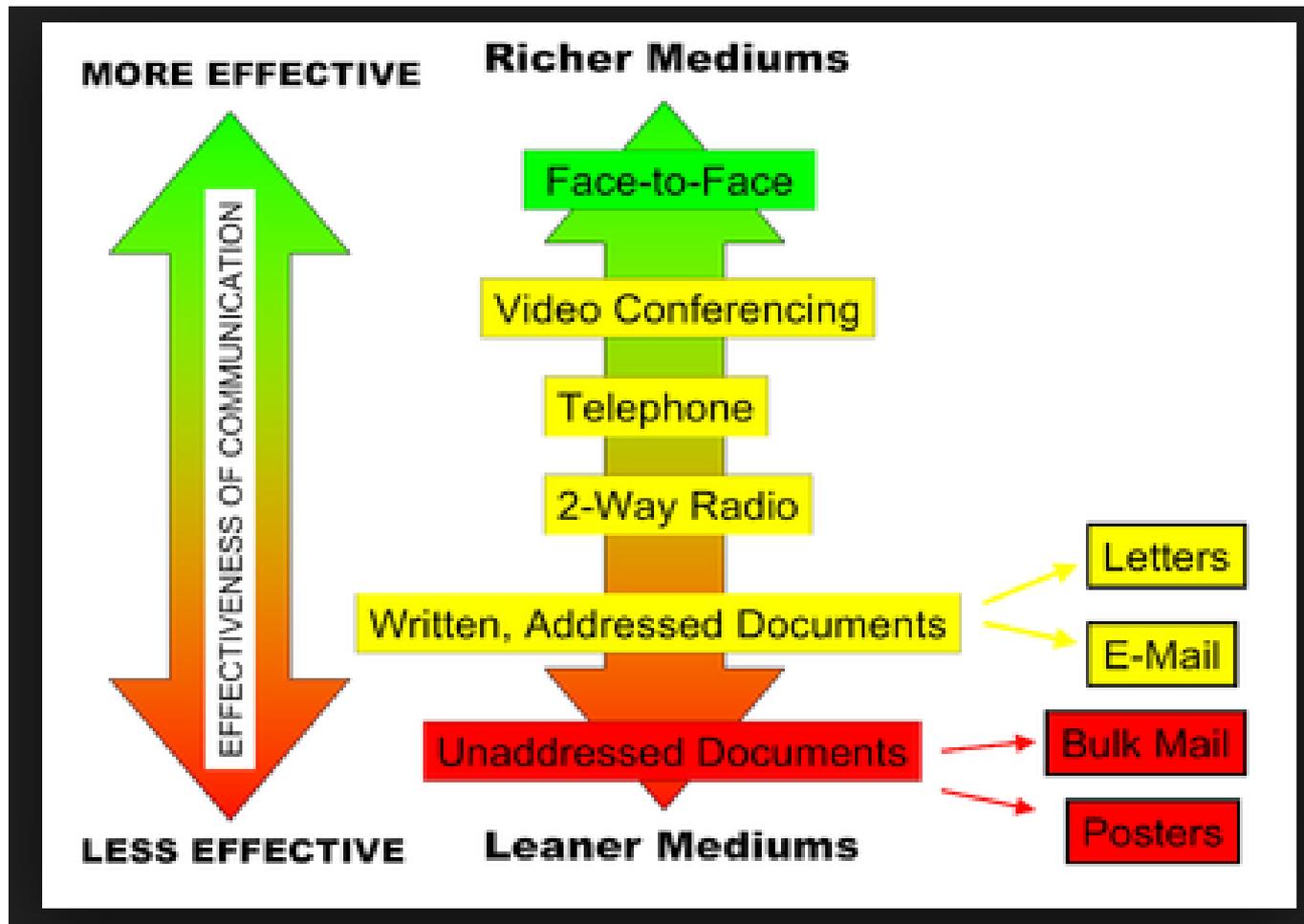


Table from: Newberry. (2001). Raising Student Social Presence In Online Classes. WebNet 2001 Proceedings (In Press)

Media Richness Theory

- Richness of the medium should be matched to the social demands of the task.

RICHER
FTF
Video
Phone
Chat
E-mail
Web
Paper
LEANER

Negotiations

Strategizing

Gen. Ideas

Info. Req.

Research



Sensemaking Theory

How people **make sense** of the world around them.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khr989IMk-c>

An example of the process: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vRTsiNBi-Q>

- Requires us to look for explanations and answers in terms of how people **see things** [not on structures or systems].
- Suggests that organizational issues, 'strategies', 'breakdowns', 'change', 'goals', 'plans', 'tasks', 'teams', do not exist because of the organization itself but because of **people's way of thinking**.

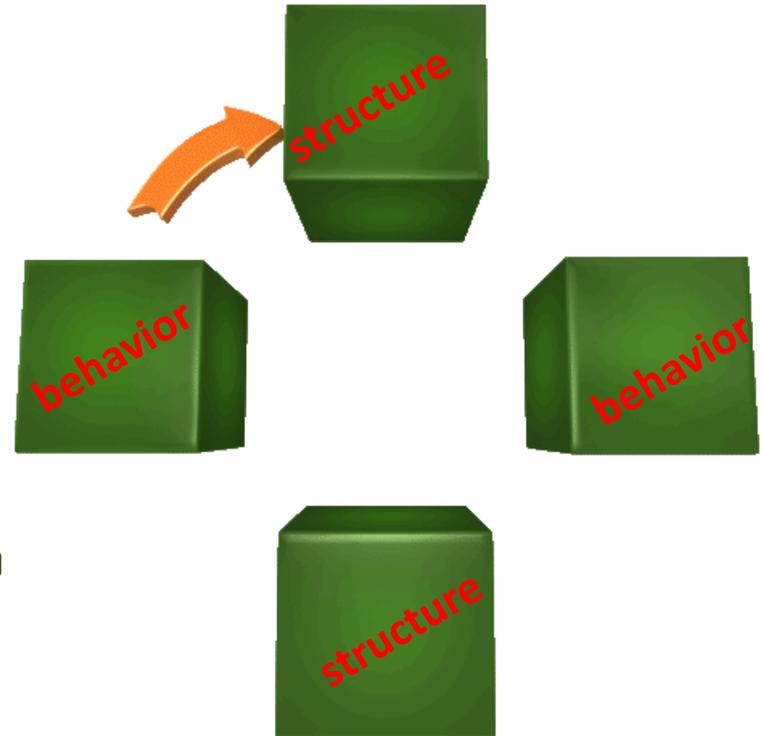
Read detailed **Core Assumptions** from:

<http://www.utwente.nl/cw/theorieenoverzicht/Theory%20Clusters/Interpersonal%20Communication%20and%20Relations/Sensemaking-1.doc/>



Structuration Theory

- Behavior and structure are intertwined;
- People go through a socialization process and become dependent of the existing social structures, but at the same time social structures are being altered by their activities.
- This means that social structures are the medium of human activities as well as the result of those activities. Social structures not only restrict behavior but also create possibilities for human behavior.
- It is not all about the restrictions people encounter in unrolling their behavior in space and time, but people also contribute to the creation of a certain time-space-structure.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zy_UzSm0NnY
- Adaptive Structuration Theory:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StF3GOHk4vc>



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