Periodical Review Of Human Communications Research Essay, Research Paper

This is a review of Human Communications Research (HCR) journal. It is published quarterly beginning in September (Fall) and ending in June (Summer). The review being done is on Volume 22, which extends from September 1995 to June 1996. The journal takes a behavioral science perspective in its research of human communications. Research areas include Interpersonal, organizational, mass communication, methodology, information systems and persuasion. HCR is a periodical that recognizes that the world is constantly evolving and that communications research must do the same in order to develop a more clear understanding of the important issues and situational demands that are at hand. In maintaining this approach, HCR focuses on exploring new research areas as well as taking a more theoretical approach. They are also trying to acknowledge more international research studies. Methodologically speaking, they seem to remain open to possibilities and try to promote discussion through their acceptance of articles.

The new senior editor Cindy Gallois, in her editorial best describes the general direction and intent of HCR. One of the main goals is to encourage diversity so that HCR will have something of interest for every reader. She also says that HCR is moving with a general trend that is away from the databased research studies towards more theory-based research and rigorous interpretations of results. Although they are trying to increase the variety of topics, they are still maintaining a behavioral science approach to communications. Gallois also welcomes the expansion of methods on research and is a firm believer in the idea that a good researcher is one that is capable of choosing the approach and methodology that best fit the research question. It is also her belief that HCR will develop more of an international flavor because the present volume marks the first time it has been edited by a non-U.S. resident. This will allow for a greater recognition of the active communication research studies being done in many countries.

Upon review of articles in HCR, I found quite few having similar topics. These included: Communication in the workplace, persuasion, deception, and communication support systems. These topics all deal with important aspects of human communication and are consistent with what is trying to be achieved by HCR. The intent of this journal is to improve human communication in areas that it would be widely useful consistent with the changing world. By researching different perspectives of issues, HCR hopes to get a better understanding of what the obstacles have previously been in order to try and improve communication relationships. An outline of some of the main topics of research in this volume should lead to a better understanding of their intent.

There were two main focuses with respect to communication in the workplace. First, research on co-worker communication when there is perceived differential treatment (superior-subordinate) and the maintenance of superior-subordinate (S-s) relationships in the work environment. Differences in these studies compared with previously related studies were highlighted to show the new direction and perspective of this research. For example, one study was concerned with the impact of the S-s relationship on transferees. This was relevant because on average over 400,000 people a year are involved in a work transfer (in the U.S.) Another article covering the presence of differential S-s treatment was designed to show a linkage between vertical and horizontal dyadic relationships within an organization. Co-worker co-operation and communication is as important as S-s communication in the workplace yet this relationship had been studied prior to this article. The study provides evidence to conclude the S-s relationship affects those outside that dyad, particularly other members within the work group, even when differential treatment is only perceived .1 Thus, this research offered insight into fairness in organizations and how perceptions of this affect coworker relations. Another study was interested in strategic situations where one or both parties of the S-s relationship were conscious of impending difficulties and therefore took steps to maintain the relationship.

The second main focus pertinent to workplace communication is the use of computer-assisted group decision making and video-conferencing. The work on group decision support systems (GDSS) is key because of technologically induced changes in communications within organizations. This study was designed to show that GDSS s aided in the structuring, organization, and participation in decision-making and that decision paths that most resembled logical normative sequences had superior outcomes to those that did not .2 Video-conferencing (becoming increasingly popular for economic reasons) was examined in one study to clarify its effectiveness with regards to performance efficiency. This was compared with face to face interaction. The only shortcoming found was that less positive impressions of others were formed in the video-conferencing situation.3 In light of these advances in electronic technologies, another study was designed to be a formal model for the examination of communication support systems in the context organizational communication. The model was designed to account for communication phenomena in companies that vary in size, strategy, structure, and complexity .4 These articles help show the direction of HCR in that they wish to create a better workplace environment as well as more efficiency within organizations in the communications area.

Next, there is an abundance of research regarding human interactions and intentions both verbal and non-verbal. Topics covered relate to effectiveness of persuasion, deception, and communication styles. Persuasion was researched at a subconscious level in the situation of an individuals social network affecting his/her media perceptions and at a conscious level by customer service courtesy being a determinant in future shopper promotion. One study involving encoding of behaviors upon others at a non-conscious level found that less than a quarter could demonstrate an awareness of the behaviors they used.5 Along the same line, the impetus of another study was to demonstrate the influences of receiver suspicion on communication (both sender and receiver). These authors created Interpersonal Deception Theory (IDT) in the study.6 The research on suspicion led into another area of study where movement behavior displayed during deception was examined. Of interest was the fact that people tend to believe that one with deceitful intentions make more bodily movement than when telling the truth. In contrast, it was found that deception is really associated with a movement decrease.7 The last three articles in this volume deal with the Behavioral Adaptation Explanation (BAE) in deceptive transactions and whether or not it accounts for the probing effect (probed sources rating as more honest than non-probed sources).8 Following is a defense of the BAE and then a defense of the critical analysis. A disagreement over methodology arises and is briefly discussed later. A large cross-cultural study on communication styles tried to determine the influence of cultural individualism-collectivism (I-C), self-construals and values on communication. It is generally believed that characteristics of individualism and collectivism exist in all cultures but one pattern is predominant. The above factors were then used to predict whether high context (HC) or low context (LC) communication prevailed in certain cultures. HC communication is one where the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person with very little coding. LC is just the opposite with most of the information being in the form of explicit code.9 An important finding in this research suggested that self construals and values were much better predictors of LC and HC communication styles than was cultural I-C. Communication effectiveness was measured in a conflict situation relating to the perception of verbal aggressiveness in one article and by choosing an appropriate media choice (between partners) in another. This line of research is significant to HCR because the aim is to get a clearer grasp of human interaction behaviors both verbal and non-verbal as well as communication styles within and across cultures.

Other articles of interest included the effects of pornography on aggressive behavior, predicting television extreme viewers and non-viewers, the cultivation effect (biasing of social reality perceptions on viewers), attachment styles and reactions to nonverbal involvement, and the role of language in interpersonal and inter-group settings. Many of these are likely part of the general interest factor that the editors of HCR proposed in the editorial.

Articles concerned with methodology are also contained in this volume. The model for the study of CSS s was one. The disagreement on the BAE as an explanation for the probing effect (last three articles) was another. The authors of the rejoinder included an outline of proper methodology because they believed that the heart of our disagreement derives from fundamental differences in opinion regarding what constitutes adequate evidence to claim support for (or to reject) the BAE .10 They gave recommendations for future BAE research consistent with their beliefs of what constitutes valid and generalizable communication research. Another study with methodological ramifications challenges the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI) on the omission of scholarly communication journals. They question the standards of these indices and therefore introduce a Journal of Impact Rating.11 The inclusion of such articles by the HCR shows the reader that they are truly open to challenge and interpretation along with a broadening of methods of research.

The brief review of the articles shows that much of what the editors set out to accomplish was covered. The general direction of more theoretically based research and an expansion in research area perspectives will help generate more discussion and critical review. The journal s intent of original research in communications remains the same. The prospect is on the improvement of communications in relevant situations and aspects of life (e.g. Workplace). A better grasp of human interaction will permit more efficient communications processes. The diversity of topics proposed by the editor does exist however; they failed to include studies concerning the youth of today (this may be due to the lack of research in this area). Possible areas of study could be the mass media affects on future perspectives and objectives or how the young people may shape the future of human communication. One other slight shortcoming was the inclusion of only three articles containing international research studies and only two cross-cultural studies. An increase in these, although difficult may be much more representative of the overall development of human communications. All other research studies were U.S. based. A review of later volumes may be the only way to know whether the senior editor s intentions of accepting more international studies were actually met. These limitations are easily overcome and should be included as part of HCR s future goals. More importantly though, the relevance of the articles accepted exemplifies their dedication to keeping up with the ongoing changes in communication processes.

There appears to be flexibility in the methodological approach taken by HCR. This is evident by the large proportion of articles containing new research areas or different direction. The inclusion of critical analysis and even a rejoinder (in the same issue) makes a statement about their openness to debate. Emphasis on theory-based articles may lead to different, untapped, areas of research, which should increase understanding potential. Many of the studies were multivariate (some with six hypotheses) which shows the broadness of research area. Most studies also had a large sample sizes indicating HCR s desire to be more representative of society as a whole and the findings more generalizable. Their approach is similar to McLuhan s (reference to course kit) in a few ways.12 The challenging of the BAE which had been widely accepted for ten years may be an indication of their willingness to discard research that is not leading them in the right direction. Accepting studies such as the Formal Model for the study of CSS s means that they are aware of the changing situations brought on by technology and are adapting to these with new approaches.

Overall, Volume 22 of HCR was successful in attaining the goals outlines in the editorial. Their main focus of new research in order to develop a clearer view of communications in increasingly relevant situations outlines their purpose. The looseness in methodological approach is due to their belief in the delicateness and breadth of human communications research. Hopefully HCR s move outside of the U.S. will lead to more issues containing international research and cross-cultural studies. This might be beneficial to the understanding of human communications in which there are an increasing amount of global implications.