**COMM 302**

**Mini Assignment 2**

**A “Best” Study**

Instructions

***Overview***:

To continue to develop your communication research methods skills, this assignment focuses on (a) identifying a **communication** topic related to the semester theme, (b) generating a preliminary RQ or H that addresses the topic, (c) locating five journal articles that address the RQ or H, and (d) summarizing **one** of the articles in not more than 2 pages using APA style (paper format and citation style).

***Step-By-Step Instructions:***

1. Using Mini-assignment #1 as a starting place, continue to develop a preliminary list of communication topics. In order to be sure that you are focusing on communication problems (rather than sociological, psychological, etc.) draw the basic communication model and determine if you can view the problem in the model. Remember communication focuses on the production and interpretation of messages.

Example:

Participant(s) B

Participant(s) A

Messages

1. Reflect on your list. Do they meet the following criteria:
   1. Focused on communication?
   2. Able to be studied using a social science approach to communication?
2. Head to the ODU library and the WWW with your communication topics list.
3. Locate **journal articles** using <http://www.cios.org> and the library’s many on-line resources. You may consult books, but only journal articles should be used in this assignment.
4. As you locate articles, from the vantage point of the write ONE **explanatory or predictive** research question (RQ) or Hypotheses (H) that pertains to your topic that you think has yet to be asked or proposed. Remember this is a preliminary RQ or H which means that it is OK to refine/revise as you work on the review.

Word the RQ or H according to the guidelines given in class and text. You should have at least one INDEPENDENT VARIABLE that you suspect is somehow related to, and/or will predict a DEPENDENT variable (or outcome). Either the IV or the DV must pertain to communication.

1. For your RQ or H, identify FIVE journal articles in the scholarly communication literature that relate either directly to your RQ or H (i.e., they say something about the DV or a variable related to the DV), or indirectly (i.e., they give background information but do not say much specifically about your RQ or H).
2. Mention all five studies, but only summarize **one** of these five studies in detail. See the Sample Paper that follows below.

It is useful to build (for yourself- not to be turned in) a summary table for the research results of your five studies. Here is a sample:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Study  (Author(s), date) | Subjects:  Number  Type of Sample | IV’s | DV’s | Results |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Use the summary table as a tool and write a review of ONE of the articles that is closely and best represents the direction that you’d like your future proposed study and end the paper with the RQ followed by the reference list.

1. Close the paper with your RQ or H (see the example)
2. Submit mini-assignment #2 in APA style (see the APA Refresher Handout on the Resources page of course homepage) as follows. (1) Include a title page, (2) not more than 2-pages summarizing your “best” study, (3) an RQ or H, and (4) a reference list that contains the APA citations for at least five related studies that includes the one you summarized. Follows is a sample what sections should look like—NOTE: THE PAPER’S CONTENT AND ITS CITATIONS ARE NOT REAL!

Husbands and Wives Communicating about “Family”

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COMM 302

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**Husbands and Wives Communicating about “Family”**

This proposal examines the topic of spousal communication about the topic of “family.” It is important to examine this topic because previous research has shown that couple’s communication about “family” affects their attitudes towards family members (Smith, 2010), shapes positive relationship development with family members (Smith, 2015), and can affect couple’s relational happiness (Jones, 2017), and most importantly affects their feelings of family connectedness.

**Review of a Study**

Previous studies of couple’s communication about “family” have concentrated on the role of frequency (Smith, 2010), timing (Smith, 2015), and content (Jones, 2017) of family discussions in predicting couple’s relational satisfaction. An important study by Homer and Merge (1999) described males’ communication about family during couple’s conversations to see if husbands talked more negatively about other family members than wives. In this study Homer and Marge gathered tapes of 100 couples conversing in their homes over dinner. Couples were from middle-income families living in the Midwest in a small town. Many of the husbands were employed at a local nuclear power plant. Couples were recruited by an ad in a local paper promising a free dinner in exchange for taping. The study was reviewed and approved by Springfield University’s IRB. The sample is non-random, but represents a potentially rich cross-section of couples’ communication upon which future studies might be based.

Couples were given a digital recorder and asked to turn it on at the start of dinner and to record the entire dinner. They were asked to eat alone (no children or guests) and to dine at home. Couples could talk about anything they chose and were encouraged to keep the conversation as typical as possible.

Conversations were transcribed (simple manifest content) and analyzed using the computer content-analytic program NUDIST which examines the frequency counts of terms used by person. In this case, the researcher first determined if an expression was about a family members and whether it was positive (She’s nice), negative (She’s mean) or neutral (She’s your mother). Coding reliability was assessed by means of a second person who independently coded 1/4 of the transcriptions. With raw percentages at 90%, coding was deemed reliable. To test the hypothesis frequency counts of positive, neutral, negative terms and whether they were said by a wife or a husband were determined. Chi-square was used to determine whether any frequency count differences were due to chance (p < .05).

Results showed that husbands and wives differed significantly in the number of negative terms used to talk about family (χ2 (df 1) = 19.23, p < .001), with husbands uttering two times as many negative terms than wives. Further, wives were found to use significantly more positive terms than their husbands (χ2 (df 1) = 15.20, p < .001).

Homer (1999) concluded that husbands spoke more negatively about their family members than their wives and wives more positively then their husbands. This striking difference should be studies as it could lead to less happiness for their relationships with their family as well as for themselves.

**Research Question (or Research Hypothesis)**

From Homer (1999) and other studies we have learned that frequency of negative comments of husbands is higher than wives. Further, we know that sex differences may also play a role among in couple’s conversations and their happiness. A next step in this research is to take a closer look at the frequency of discussions about family and ethnic culture (Black, White, and Bi-Racial) on the theory that the frequency of episodes of communication about family affects couple’s relational satisfaction differently across different cultural groups. This raises the following research question for future study:

RQ: Relational satisfaction of Black, White, and Bi-Racial couples is affected differently by the frequency of negative conversations about family.

**References**

Homer, A., & Marge, A. (1999). Men talking about family with their wives. *Journal of Husband Communication*, *15*, 23-33.

Jones, A. (2017). Couples talking about family at home: Effects on their relationships. *Couple Communication Quarterly*, *12*, 57-67.

Marge, A. (1999). Women talking about family. *Journal of Wives’ Communication*, 15, 15-45,

Smith, A. (2010). Couples’ frequency of family talk. *Journal of Unhappy Marital Communication*, *16*, 1-15.

Smith, A. (2015). Bad timing: Couples’ conversations about family. *International Journal of Unhappy Family Communication Studies*, *85*, 123-153.