Hyperpersonal Model Application Discussion

Name

Western Connecticut State University

The Hyperpersonal Model explains how computer-mediated communication can be hyperpersonal when compared to traditional face-to-face communication. Since computer-mediated communication lacks face-to-face (FtF) contact people are able to picture what the person they are talking to looks like and acts like, people are able to think more about their responses and they are able to behave in a way that is unusual for them. The Hyperpersonal Model can be applied to the online issue of catfishing. Catfishing involves one person lying to another person over the Internet about who they are, what they look like and what they do. Most of the time catfishing leads to fake online romantic relationships and in the end the person that was "catfished" is left broken hearted. According to the Wikipedia page on the Hyperpersonal Model, "This perspective suggests that CMC users may experience greater levels of intimacy, unity and liking within a group or dyad than similar groups or dyads interacting FtF" ("Hyperpersonal Model, n.d.). This level of intimacy, unity and liking that develops between the catfisher and the catfished is easy for certain people to reach. Most of the victims of this online scam are lonely people who want to find love. They go on online chat rooms, friend request random people on Facebook and go on dating sites hoping to find "the one." Because they deeply desire a connection with someone else they quickly let their walls down after they begin talking to a stranger on the Internet. These conversations become hyperpersonal to the point to where they enter romantic relationships with someone they have never met because they feel there is a real connection. It is easy for the catfisher to make their victim fall for them because they are using computer-mediated communication instead of face-to-face communication. By using computer-mediated communication the catfisher is able to be strategic about what they say, when they say it

and how. Also, because this type of communication does not involve FtF interaction the person being catfished has no nonverbal cues to pick up on, they do not know what the person they are talking to truly looks like, they do not know the sound of this person's voice and they do not know how the person truly behaves because they have never met in person. According to the Hyperpersonal Model, this leaves the person being catfished with plenty of room to imagine for themselves what the person they are talking to looks like and acts like. This freedom to create in their head what the person is like leads to the receivers creating a better version of realty, which ultimately will lead to disappointment ("Hyperpersonal Model," n.d.). This theory also explains that because people interacting via computer-mediated communication have time to gather their thoughts before responding they behave in ways they think the person they are communicating to will want and expect ("Hyperpersonal Model," n.d.). This is seen through the example of catfishing when the catfisher asks strategic questions to learn about the person they are talking to. They ask about this information so they can hook their prey be pretending to have the same values, interests, etc. Similar to the results found in Eckstein's and Lever's article, where victims of intimate partner violence prefer to use computer-mediated communication over face-to-face communication because of the comfort and ease they feel with using this type of communication channel, catfishers also prefer computer-mediated communication. By using the Internet and hiding behind a screen catfishers are anonymous, especially because the online profiles they make contain lies and false information. The saddest part about the growing issue of catfishing is that those who fall victim to a catfisher usually believe that they had found real love and someone to care for; however, in the end it was just someone lying to them and using hyperpersonal

computer-mediated communication to gain as much information as possible. The Hyperpersonal Model has a large scope, is parsimonious, heuristic, testable and useful. This model can be applied to any interpersonal communication that takes place and it highlights the difference between computer-mediated and FtF communication. It is also easy to understand what the model is explaining which makes it easy and practical for people to implement into their daily lives. By knowing the pros and cons of computer-mediated communication people are better educated on what communication medium would be the best fit for them. This model is heuristic and testable as shown by the examples and application portion of the Wikipedia page and by the article, "When Technology Hurts and Helps: Technologically-Mediated Disclosure and Support-Seeking for Intimate Partner Violence." A large amount of research has been stimulated and tested because of the Hyperpersonal Model. A critique of this model is that it ignores how people form their identity in everyday communication and it ignores how each person understands media ("Hyperpersonal Model," n.d.).

References

Eckstein, & Lever. (2016). When Technology Hurts and Helps: Technologically-Mediated Disclosure and Support-Seeking for Intimate Partner Violence. Retrieved June 14, 2016.

Hyperpersonal model. (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved June 14, 2016, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperpersonal_model