
Imagine a looming inevitable conflict with a loved one. You know it’s coming, because there’s a very difficult issue that needs discussion. You know your loved one will be defensive and angry when the conversation starts. But if you’re lucky, you can have that discussion several times, in your imagination, before the actual encounter. You can experiment with numerous approaches, envision multiple responses you might encounter, and finally choose an informed approach that will hopefully minimize the conflict and maximize the chances of constructive outcome. With the imagined experimental discussions, you have made good use of the interpersonal communication resource known as imagined interactions.

James Honeycutt’s *Imagined Interactions* is a thorough scholarly treatment of the communication practice of imagined interaction—internal dyadic conversation. The work demands a careful focused reading, given its densely written style. But it is certainly approachable, and an enlightening, useful reference. It represents a substantive review of relevant literature related to dyadic intrapersonal communication, in which the author has conducted considerable research.

As a scholarly work, it presents research findings in an objective, tentative manner, as one might expect from a responsible scientific treatment. Less empirical judgments and extensions are left to the reader, and those who synthesize such research for popular press publication. The subject matter however, is potentially quite practical—with portent for therapeutic and other personal value. The author does include practical connections through the sharing of journal entries written about real-life experiences with imagined interactions, and by including elements of practical advice. The author is persuasive predominantly through the objective and scholarly treatment of the research findings, rather than simply a persuasive writing style.

The work includes numerous characteristics and functions of imagined interactions, plus theoretical underpinnings—including Mead, Dewey, and others. Research on daydreaming is addressed, as are varying cultural contexts, including an interesting look at the marked variance between American and British imagined interactions. The book contains a data collection instrument, the Survey of Imagined Interactions, complete with scoring and adaptation guidance. Honeycutt also offers various directions for future research. Among Honeycutt’s discussions, is the use of imagined interactions by the lonely, those conducting employee performance reviews, the homeless, and others.

Imagined interactions have six functions, according to Honeycutt—relational maintenance, dealing with conflict, rehearsing future interactions, self-understanding, catharsis, and to compensate for unavailable actual communication. As in the opening example used above concerning confrontation with a loved one, imagined interactions can serve more than one function at the same time.

Among Honeycutt’s closing words are the comments that imagined interactions “are a natural and common phenomena we can use to improve our lives. Visualizing conversations before or after they take place has several major benefits. We become more competent conversationists, improve our understanding of self and others, keep important relationships alive, and reduce our tensions” (p. 141).

One of the key contributions of the book lies in its being a thorough review of the imagined interactions research. It serves as a compendium of related findings, complete with over 200 reference sources, and various possibilities for future research.

The book brings together considerable research on dyadic self-talk into a coherent useful collection. It would be a worthy consideration as a reading in connection with
courses in Interpersonal Communication, Psychology of Communication and Forensics as well as being of a useful resource for those with interest in human communication.

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