



Lifespan Research
Methods
An Overview

Assumptions:
Social Science
Approach
Lifespan Communication


- "Reality" is that which can be empirically observed
- Reasoning and logic combined with empirical observation is a primary approach to understanding
- Arguments require logic, reasoning, and empirical data
- Uses numerical measurements (shown to be valid and reliable) and empirical qualitative assessments (using multiple observational and analytical procedures)
- There is a commonality of aspects of communication development AND that individuals are unique in how they approach a given process,
- Trait and state factors change over the course of the human lifespan

Assumptions:
Rhetorical/
Critical Approach
Lifespan Communication

- "Reality" is socially constructed and not fixed
- Reasoning, logic, and criticism are the primary approaches to understanding
- Arguments use linguistic and artifact evidence, and are framed by philosophical/cultural/social systems of reasoning (Marxist, Neo-Freudian, Feminist, Aristotelian, etc.)
- Structures of power shape discourses and experience—must illuminate systems of power
- Social realities change over the course of the human lifespan, and that experiences of "life" are also changing.

“Identity” as a Lifespan Concept: A Communication Approach

Twenty Statements Test (TST)
Refer to Montemayer & Eisen (1977)



Grace & Kramer, 2003, TST Coding Categories

- Idiocentric—Statements about personal qualities, attitudes, beliefs, states, traits: I am happy.
- Large Group—statements about membership in groups with many people: I am a student
- Small group—statements about membership in groups with few members: I am a husband (family)
- Allocentric—statements about interdependence, friendship, responsiveness to others, concern with the viewpoints of others: I am a sociable person.



Communication Traits and States: A Lifespan Developmental Approach

Tolerance for . . . Disagreement

- "Self-control" or "Tolerance" as developmental (Walsh & Marshmallow test)
- Teven et al (1998) "...disagreements about substantive and procedural matters were just that, disagreements, unless personal issues became involved (called "interpersonal conflict" by some). When such a combination is present . . . this is conflict. They also recognized that not everyone would agree as to when an interaction moves from disagreement into conflict—whether they are observers or participants in the interaction. They posited the existence of an individual difference variable, which they labeled "tolerance for disagreement" (TFD) which they employed to explain why some people will perceive the presence of conflict much sooner than others will."
- Tolerance for Disagreement Measure
