

## COMM 601

### Short assignment 1

#### Understanding Lifespan Communication Stages

This paper asks you to critically review and begin to develop a bibliography of scholarly journal articles and scholarly books that pertain in some way to some aspect of communication in three understudied lifespan stages: childhood (infancy- later childhood), adolescence, and later adulthood (65-onward).

The purpose of the assignment is to help you begin to familiarize yourself with the kinds of research conducted during these stages, assist you in building a body of literature for later use in your major paper, as well as to help you hone your organizational and critical skills.

You will notice as you begin to examine the communication literature within these lifespan stages, that some topics have received lots of attention in the communication studies in all three of these lifespan stages (e.g., television viewing), while other topics (e.g., communicating forgiveness) will have received little to no attention in the communication literature, but perhaps have been studied in related fields such as human development, child development, child psychology, aging, gerontology, and so on.

The challenge of this assignment is to begin to narrow the existing communication literature of these three lifespan stages to a specific topic that has been examined, to some extent, across these stages, so that you can begin to eventually describe the developmental arc of the topic.

The COMM 601 resources page provides an example of a chapter that reviews the communication literature during childhood of the topic of humor. Although this paper is really is more of an example of what I am looking for your major paper, it provides an example of where we are heading as well as an example of what a review should include.

- For this paper, the format should be a short annotated bibliography of key resources for each of the lifespan stages. How much detail you include in each annotation will vary but I recommend keeping it concise. And, how many entries you include depends on how much research exists on a given topic. Format the paper using the following subheadings and begin each section with an orienting paragraph. Be sure to include references list for all sources used other than those annotated. The paper should follow APA STYLE (6<sup>TH</sup> EDITION) for the citations and annotations.

#### **Childhood**

#### **Adolescence**

#### **Later Life**

- Here is an example for a section, an orientating paragraph, and a bibliographic entry pertaining the to a topic of “Creating Optimal Communication Learning Environments”

## Childhood

During early childhood, we know from Bruner (1966), Vygotsky (1978) and others that it is vital that parents and caregivers scaffold communication foundations for children in their charge. For each desired communication skill parents and caregivers should consider, for example, creating and playing communication games, reading stories, as well as engaging in conversational routines that support the learning of a given skill. For example, when scaffolding humor skills, parents might consider tickle-giggle games, skill face games, and more. The citations that follow speak to creating communication environments that are conducive to communication learning.

Elkind, D. (1989). *Parents' guide to raising kids who love to learn: Infant to grade school (Children's Television Workshop family living series)*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Although the focus of the book is on creating learning environments for children and not on children's communication per se, Elkind's book covers many topics that those seeking information about children's communication will find useful. And, although the intended audience is parents with a general reading level, the book is thoroughly supported with extensive references to scholarly work (from education and psychology). The book's twelve chapters are organized into three main sections (Joy of Learning, Enhancing the process, and Learning and Culture). Those interested in children's communication will find chapter Four (Language- Speaking, Reading and Writing) and Chapter 6 (Social skills) especially useful as well as the first chapter that covers the critical role of 'Play' in children's learning. The book is a part of the publication and production activities of the Children's Television Workshop (producers of "Sesame Street"). Among the factors that make the work strong are its clear writing and solid grounding in classical children's education literature. Included among its weaknesses are the need for updating, and the need to make communication more central. At times, readers interested in what the book has to say about communication will come away wanting more depth. Yet, the work remains useful for parents (especially new parents) and those interested in the role of communication in learning.

## References

Bruner, J. (1966). *Towards a theory of instruction*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA  
Harvard University Press.