Adult: Early/Middle

Shaw 7-8; Harwood 2-4; Sunwolf 5

AGING

- Increasing risk to physical health
- Increased ability to engage in relativistic thinking
- Fluid intelligence (abstraction) and crystal intelligence
- Emotional intelligence:
  - Self-awareness
  - Self-management
  - Social awareness
  - Relationship management
- Increasing role behaviors
- Manage "life events" and "life crises"
- Group affiliations (Super groups—Sunwolf)

Aging and Health

Aging

Typical or Normal	**Problematic or Pathological**
• Short term memory changes in capacity (e.g., people's names)	• Dementia
• Abilities to understand and produce complex sentences changes	• Alzheimer's disease (AD)
• Hearing capacity changes	• Syntax = OK; Semantics and lexical processes (pronoun usages) impaired
• Changes in inhibitory capacity (e.g., off-target verbosity, increased self-focus)	• Indirect repair when communicating with person with AD

- Most severe cognitive and linguistic effects at 80+ years of age
- Although under-studied, there are some capacities thought to improve with age—creative writing, long-term memory, vocabulary increases, pronunciation can improve, improvements in lexical diversity, story-telling abilities, and more
- Some communication problems occur as a result of societal negative attitudes, societal negative stereotyping, societal negative Pygmalion effects
- Levels of communicative capabilities can improve– interpersonal, mass communication, and inter-group

Positive Approach to Aging

Selective Compensation with Optimization Meta-Theory

- Selective Compensation and Optimization Meta-Theory (Baltes & Baltes, 1990)
  - **Selection**
    - Elective selection
    - Loss-based selection
    - Voluntary vs. involuntary selection
  - **Optimization**
    - Application of methods to achieve selected goals
    - Current state vs. desired state
  - **Compensation**
    - Use of alternative methods when others become unavailable
- Longitudinal measurement
- Studied by Dynamical Systems Analysis: ". . . premise that covariance relationships between variables and their rates of change with respect to time
  can illuminate and simplify the discussion of intraindividual processes" (Boker, 2013)

Implications for Communication of SCO-Meta-theory

- Message processes conceptually related to **selection**
  - Information seeking and acquisition
  - Information understanding
  - Information retention
  - Communication & decision making
  - Communication and problem-solving
- Message processes conceptually related to **optimization**
  - Communication values
  - Positive communication
    - Encouragement of self-efficacy
    - Communication creativity
- Message processes conceptually related to **compensation**
  - Stereotyping (negative)
  - Role-modeling

Boker, S. M. (2013) Selection, Optimization, Compensation, and Equilibrium Dynamics. GeroPsych: The Journal of Gerontopsychology and Geriatric Psychiatry, 26:1, 61-73.

Propositions Guiding Future Research and Education

1. Communication reflects and shapes our understanding of aging.
2. Communication shapes people's experience of aging
3. Age-group memberships are fundamentally important to our sense of self (Social Identity Theory—ingroup/outgroup)
4. Age-group memberships influence communication phenomena

STEREOTYPING AND AGING

- Stereotype: cognitive representation of a group (framed in terms of traits)
- Attitude: overall emotional response (consisting of beliefs and valuations)
- Harwood (pp.51-51): Measure of Attitude Toward Aging

Stereotyping Basics and Aging

- Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986)
  - Identification with group
  - Me/not me
- Stereotype content model
  - Positive and negative content
- Age identity

Stereotyping Basics and Aging

- Social mobility (Identify with younger groups)
- Social Creativity (Red Hat Society, Blue Thong Society, Gray Panthers)
- Social competition (AARP, AMAC, American Seniors, etc.)

Responses to Negative Stereotyping

INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Theories

- Communication Accommodation Theory (Howard Giles)
  - Convergence/divergence
  - Over-accommodation (Patronizing elderspeak/baby-talk)
  - Under-accommodation (not knowing what to say in response to painful self-disclosure)
- Communication Predicament Model (Hummert)
  1. Recognize cues (Old age)
  2. Activate stereotyping (see. P. 81)
  3. Modify speech behavior
  4. Constrain communication/ reinforce stereotypes
  5. Loss of personal control/self-esteem;
  6. Changes—physiological, psychological, socio-cultural