

## Constructivism

- Main point- characteristics of the individual – in particular, cognitive complexity – affect the quality of messages we create and thus the success of our communication
- Key Concepts
  - Interpersonal constructs – perceptual categories used to evaluate another person’s thoughts and behaviors
  - Differentiation (RCQ) – the number of different personality constructs used to portray a person
    - Mean vs nice
    - Smart vs dumb
    - Clean vs dirty
    - Fast vs slow
    - Religious vs not
    - Loyal vs disloyal
- Cognitive Complexity- the number of constructs an individual uses to think about another person (usually tapped by differentiation as measure by RCQ)
  - Determined by age and socialization environment
- Role-Taking Ability- the ability to see the world from the perspective of another person (i.e- perspective-taking)
- Multiple goals and complex plans- multiple goals that must be met through interaction require complex plans
- Person centered messages- the extent to which messages reflect an awareness of and adaptation to subjective, affective, and relational aspects of the communication contexts
- Beneficial outcomes- communication tends to be:
  - More influential (persuasion)
  - More comforting
  - Greater organizational effectiveness

## The Interactional View

- Basic idea- that individuals are parts of interconnected relationships systems – a systems approach
  - A family system
- Properties of Systems I-III
  - Wholeness
    - Nonsummativity
  - Feedback
  - Equifinality
    - Multiple ways to get to the same place
- Axioms 1-4
  - Axiom I
    - One cannot not communicate
      - All behavior is communication
      - Also, one cannot not influence
  - Axiom II
    - All communication includes both content and relationship levels.
      - Content (report) is the “what” of communication
      - Relationship (command) is the “how” of communication
        - This is “meta-communication,” or communication about communication
      - “Its not what you said, its how you said it..”
  - Axiom III

- The nature of a relationship is contingent upon the punctuation of the communication sequences
- Axiom IV
  - All communication interchanges are either symmetrical or complementary
    - Symmetrical: equal power
    - Complementary: differences in power
  - Later modifications added "transitory"
- Implications of the Interactional View-
  - "Crazy communication" may be due not to a crazy person, but a sane person put in a crazy context
    - the double blind
  - changing individuals won't work without changing the system
    - substance abuse
    - relationship patterns

#### Family Communication Patterns

- Basic idea- Used to describe family norms for how topics are discussed. Can be thought of as the relationship between three things parent, child, and topic. 4 graphic representations of how parent and child interact
- Conformity Orientation- focuses on parental deference and obedience
  - Parents who have conformity oriented communication also:
    - Have an authoritarian parenting style
    - Use restricted mediation of TV
- Conversation Orientation- Focuses on open discussion, sharing ideas, and accepting conflict.
  - Parents who have conversation oriented communication also
    - Have authoritative parenting styles