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World views and narrative gerontology: Situating reminiscence behavior within a lifespan perspective

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Abstract

The field of gerontology has been described as data rich but theory poor. The same can be said for the subarea of reminiscence research. Little attention has been paid to the superordinate metamodels which frame reminiscence work. Consequently, the metatheoretical assumptions and limitations of the dominant approach to reminiscence research remain virtually unknown. This article identifies three "world hypotheses" (Pepper 1942) or metamodels (i.e., the Mechanistic, Organismic, and Contextual) appropriated by developmental psychology because of their heuristic utility and summarizes key strengths and weaknesses of each. I argue that the majority of reminiscence research has been conducted under the rubric of only one metamodel, namely Organicism. I then discuss what reminiscence research conducted within each perspective might look like. Finally, I provide empirical examples to argue for the

advantages of a contextual metamodel and its derivative lifespan perspective for future reminiscence research.



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