

Module 5: Life Span Development

Topic 2 Content: Longitudinal and Cross-Sectional Methods

Memory Over Time



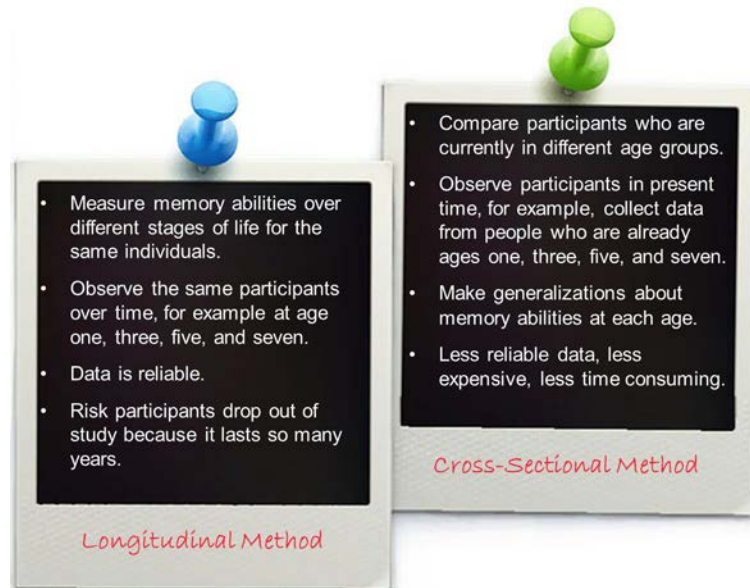
Memories are like photographs in the mind. If you were a researcher who wanted to study memory abilities at different stages of life, you would need to make a decision about whether to use a longitudinal method or cross-sectional method. Take a moment to consider how each of the different research methods could be used to set up your study. Hover your mouse over the photographs below to discover positive and negative consequences of using longitudinal and cross-sectional methods for this study. Think about the following questions:

- What would be positive and negative about using a longitudinal method?
- What would be positive and negative about using a cross-sectional method?
- Which method would you prefer to use? Why?

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Comparison of Longitudinal and Cross-Sectional Methods



Longitudinal method

- Measure memory abilities over different stages of life for the same individuals.
- Observe the same participants over time, for example at age one, three, five, and seven.
- Data is reliable.
- Risk participants drop out of study because it lasts so many years.

Cross-sectional method

- Compare participants who are currently in different age groups.
- Observe participants in present time, for example, collect data from people who are already ages one, three, five, and seven.
- Make generalizations about memory abilities at each age.
- Less reliable data, less expensive, less time consuming