

Ecological Systems Theory

Views the person as developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment (Berk, 1998).

Bronfenbrenner (Urie) (1917-2005) American Developmental Psychologist

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory impacts Cognitive Development and a child's Social & Emotional Development.

Microsystem

The microsystem contains settings in which the child has direct interactions and that have a direct influence on the child's development such as family, peers, school, neighborhood, sports, activities, etc. The interactions at this level are considered bidirectional relationships - in other words your reactions to the people in your microsystem will affect how they treat you in return. This is the most influential level of the ecological systems theory.

Mesosystem

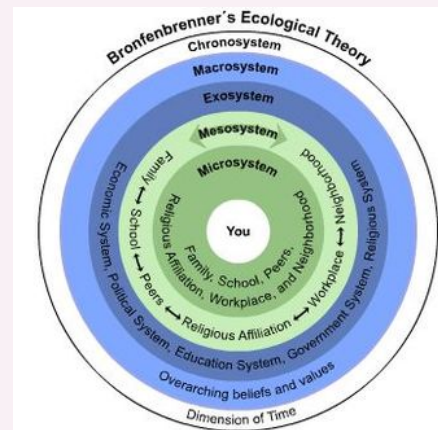
The mesosystem consists of the interactions between the different parts of a child's microsystem. The mesosystem is where a child's individual microsystems do not function independently, but are interconnected and assert influence upon one another

Example: A parent (microsystem) coaches his son's softball team (microsystem).

Exosystem

The exosystem refers to a setting that does not involve the child as an active participant, but still affects them. This includes decisions that have bearing on the child, but in which they have no participation in the decision-making process. For example, a mom gets a new job that allows her to spend evenings with her child and participate at school events.

Ecological Systems Diagram



Macrosystem

Rather than direct relationships with individuals, this level contains cultural values, health, public policy, laws, etc. The culture's belief systems and ideology influences the child directly through interactions with others. For example, if it is a cultural belief that mothers should have the sole responsibility of staying at home and raising the children (macrosystem), the mother would be less likely to pursue work outside of the home (parent's workplace is part of the exosystem). This in turn would affect the amount of time that the child's mother has to interact with the child's school and neighborhood (mesosystem). The mother's ability to carry out the responsibility of taking care of her child within the family (microsystem) would also be affected..

Chronosystem

This system consists of all of the experiences that a child has had during his or her lifetime. The chronosystem includes environmental events, major life transitions, and historical events.

Example: the divorce of a child's parents would affect a 5-year-old child differently than it would affect an 17-year-old child. Likewise, the social and academic development and growth of an African American child who grew up during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s would be very different than a those of an African American child who grew up during the Iraq War in the 2000s.