

Early Childhood Theorists by Aaron and Debbie – Part 1

Bronfenbrenner

Early Childhood Theorist – Urie Bronfenbrenner brought to you by:
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So, who is Bronfenbrenner?

- OK, let's start with his name: Bron-fen-brenner (Urie)
- Born in Moscow 29 April 1917, and moved to the USA in 1923
- Studied at Cornell and Harvard and gained his PhD from Michigan University in 1943.
- Had a life long interest in psychology, and returned to teach at Cornell in 1948.
- Instrumental in the creation of Headstart (1965)
- Wrote, or associated with, over 300 articles & chapters and 14 books
- He died on 25 Sept. 2005

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Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory of Child Development

Nested Systems: Urie Bronfenbrenner's Key Concept

Microsystem: The child's immediate environment, for example, the family, preschool, neighborhood, and peer group.

Mesosystem: The links between the child's immediate environments. For example, the relationship between the family and the preschool.

Exosystem: This refers to the external settings in the child's environment that impact directly on their development. For example, their father and mother's workplace.

Macrosystem: This refers to the child's entire culture context. For example, the economy and changes in government.

Chronosystem: The patterns of events and transitions in the child's life.

Bronfenbrenner suggested that children's development and learning can be understood and explained by thinking in terms of a number of the layers that encompass children as they grow and develop, with the closest layer to the child being the *Microsystem* – these are often thought of as being like a Russian Doll

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Bronfenbrenner: children's learning in a wider context

Children are now growing up in a world that is globally interconnected and increasingly shaped by technology and social media. This increase in digital technology and social media means that the social nature of learning for many children is now very different to how it was in previous decades. One theory that helps us understand and explain how this increasingly complicated world impacts on children's learning and their development is the *Ecological Systems Model*, now known as the *Bioecological Model* offered by Urie Bronfenbrenner.

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How it has shaped provision?

- Bronfenbrenner's theory has placed a much greater emphasis on how wider economic, political and cultural factors impact upon children's learning and their development.
- Here, we might reflect on how different governments in the UK have influenced and shaped the direction of schools and early years provision.

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Bronfenbrenner in practice?

- 📍 If we take Bronfenbrenner's model into a setting, what could that look like?
- 👤 **Microsystem** - this is the unique child! Relationships, interactions, closeness, cuddles, key person, friendships, likes/dislikes and so on.
- 👨👩👧👦 **Mesosystem** - this is positive relationships! Parentships with parents, relationships with colleagues, supportive leadership & management, supervision, mentoring and so on.
- 🏡 **Exosystem** - this is the environment (emotional as well as physical), enabling environments, access to outdoors, staff/parental workloads and stressors etc.
- 🏛️ **Macrosystem** - the 'bigger' picture? Policies, procedures, Government legislation - other theories and concepts.
- 📅 **Chronosystem** - transition/change/consistency, as well as socio-historical events (such as the one we are living through).

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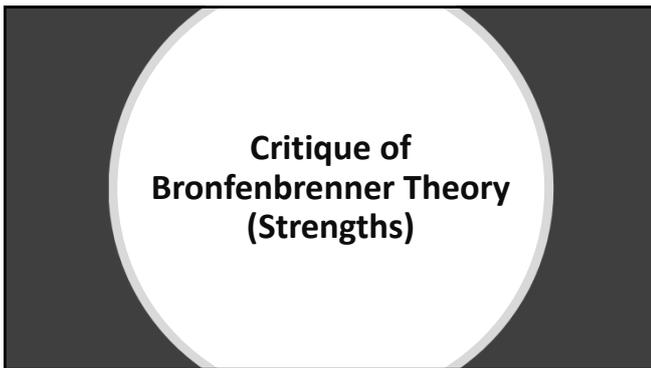
In order to develop normally,
a child requires progressively more complex
joint activity with one or more adults...

Every child needs at least one adult who is
irrationally crazy about him or her.

That's number one.
First, last and always.

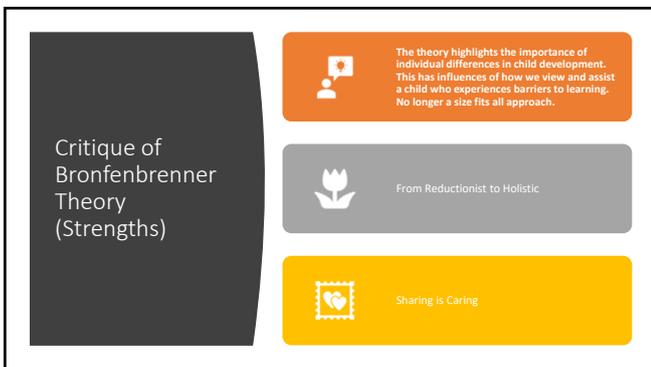
Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005)

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**Critique of
Bronfenbrenner Theory
(Strengths)**

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Critique of
Bronfenbrenner
Theory
(Strengths)

-  The theory highlights the importance of individual differences in child development. This has influences of how we view and assist a child who experiences barriers to learning. No longer a size fits all approach.
-  From Reductionist to Holistic
-  Sharing is Caring

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Critique of Bronfenbrenner Theory (Weaknesses)

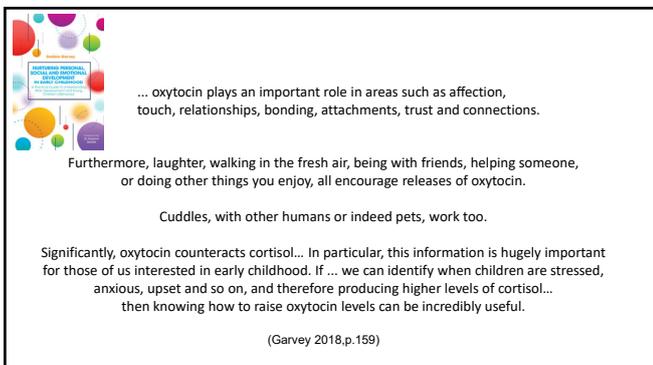
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Critique of Bronfenbrenner's Theory (Weaknesses)

- His theory does account for the complexity of development and is universally applicable, it may be difficult to apply in practice. Due to the following factors:
- Extensive scope of ecological and environmental detail is needed to build up an account of an individual. At what point is all the detail enough? What is included and excluded? Therefore, the framework does not account for detailed mechanisms for development.
- No Balance
- Implementation – The theory postulates that all factors need to be considered...

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... oxytocin plays an important role in areas such as affection, touch, relationships, bonding, attachments, trust and connections.

Furthermore, laughter, walking in the fresh air, being with friends, helping someone, or doing other things you enjoy, all encourage releases of oxytocin.

Cuddles, with other humans or indeed pets, work too.

Significantly, oxytocin counteracts cortisol... In particular, this information is hugely important for those of us interested in early childhood. If ... we can identify when children are stressed, anxious, upset and so on, and therefore producing higher levels of cortisol... then knowing how to raise oxytocin levels can be incredibly useful.

(Garvey 2018,p.159)

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