

ECH326 Children, families and communities in a diverse society

Reading: Children, families and communities by Grace, Hodge and McMahon (2017)

Chapter 1: Child development in context (Grace, Hayes and Wise)

- Nature vs nurture debate was one of the first debates in ece
- However it has become evident that it is not either or. The developing child should be understood in terms of both nature and nurture
- This book focuses on nurture ie how does context influence learning and development

Why is context important?

- We are more able to influence the environment in which the children are raised than the child's inherited genes. We can play a role in intervention programs such as early learning programs, health screening, parenting programs which can improve children's experiences. Children should have the opportunities to reach their full potential regardless of their genes.

Children in Australian context:

- Australia has a well developed economy and many children benefit from living in this well developed country. however, it is evident that there continues to be a huge gap between those who benefit and those who struggle. Disadvantaged children include ATSI, socio-economically disadvantaged
- AEDC – 22% of Australian children disadvantaged in at least one domain. For ATSI children 42% are in this category

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model:

- He was the first to tie together the different aspects of contextual influence within one model. other attempts at measuring environmental influence were tightly controlled and attracted criticism that it did not account for broader cultural contexts and complexity.
- His model was like matryoshka dolls: in the middle there is the individual (sex, age, health), then there is the next layer, the microsystem (incl school, family, peers, neighbourhood, health services), the mesosystem (the relationship between elements of the microsystem. For eg are the values of home and school life different or the same? – as this can influence how smoothly they interact) , the exosystem (friends of family, parents' workplace, social welfare services, media, legal services), the macrosystem (attitudes and ideologies of the culture)
- The influences between environment and child are bidirectional (the child has an influence on the environment. It is not only that the environment has an influence on the child)

- Developmental niche: individuals tend to seek out niches in which the context matches their own characteristics
- Chronosystem: individuals and contexts change over time. eg parenting changes over time according to the age of the child