

PART 1: APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES

Week 1 - Lecture 1: Interconnections between children, families and communities

The role of context in children's development

- § ▪ Differences in appearances are results from not only genetics but an individual's environment
- § ▪ Assumed to be born with temperament or personality
- However life circumstances can alter them
 - § ▪ Exploring the way nature and nurture work together, impacting child development
 - § ▪ Educators are in a position to alter and improve the context of children's lives to increase their advantages
- Knowledge and guidance can be used to enhance development
- § ▪ Australia 'The Lucky Country' ○ Well-developed economy
- High health standards ○ Education and Welfare services ○ Stable political system
- § ▪ Context for optimum development ○ Supportive families
- Financial security § ▪ Concerning statistics
- Increased obesity, depression and substance abuse
- Decreased health and economic status of indigenous children §
 - Alan Hayes
- Two worlds ⇒ Advantaged
- ⇒ Disadvantaged (gap widening between) ○ Children as young as 2 years old

- § ▪ 1/4 of school starters lacking adequate language and cognitive skills
 - Primarily children from low socioeconomic
 - From remote areas
 - Indigenous families

Theorists

Bronfenbrenner – The Social Ecology Model

- § ▪ •Ecological approach to child development
 - § ▪ •Demonstrating complex layers of contextual influence
 - § ▪ •Show the relationship between the individuals immediate environment and social policy and culture
- Social Ecological Model
- Individual** - Child
- Microsystems**- direct participation and interaction (e.g. family, childcare setting, peer group, school, church or neighbourhood)
- Mesosystems**- interrelations between settings in which child actively participants (e.g. the degree of congruence between the two settings)
- Exosystems**- linkages between 2 or more settings (e.g. parent workplace, religious hierarchy, Educational system, government agencies, mass media)
- Macrosystems**- the pervasive influence of social, cultural, economic and political issues (e.g. dominant beliefs and ideologies)
- Chronosystem**- development within the person (e.g. dimensions of time)
- What are the Practical Implications of this Approach?

1- Focuses on the developing child in the real world

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- . 2- Pays a lot of attention to the social environment in its many diverse forms
 - . 3- It recognises the essentially active role of the individuals- shaping as well as being shaped by social contexts
- § ▪ Two way street

- Children will be influenced by environment and people
- The environment and people will be influenced by children
 - § ▪ Children are active beings and will choose environments that reflect their own characteristics
 - § ▪ Individuals as well as contexts change over time (chronosystem)
 - § ▪ Parenting approaches to behaviour management change and alter depending on child's age
- Changes historically over time § ▪ Women increased role in workforce: cultural change, both influences and is influenced by

social policy Bronfenbrenner – The Biological Model

- § ▪ Individual characteristics: temperament
 - § ▪ Biological elements/genetics
 - § ▪ 'Proximal Processes': people, activities, symbols and objects that act as mediators between the individual and the influential context
 - § ▪ Proximal processes lead to competence or dysfunction depending on
 - Form
 - Timing
 - Predictability
 - Intensity
 - Duration
 - Frequency
 - § ▪ 'Microtime' – continuity or discontinuity of episodes of proximal processes
 - § ▪ 'Mesotime' – frequency of these episodes over large time intervals (e.g. months)
 - § ▪ 'Macrotime' – changing expectations and events within society (chronosystem)
- Similar Theories**

- § ▪ ·Vygotsky – ‘guided participation’
 - § ▪ ·Wengers – model of development through participation in numerous communities of practice
 - § ▪ ·Gallimore & Weisners – ecocultural theory
 - § ▪ ·Rogoff – cultural context **Week 1 - Lecture 2: Parenthood and Family Life-Cycle Transitions**
- The Family - Life Cycle** Succession of stages through which the typical or nuclear family passes.

1. Inadequate model for the development of new family and household structures
2. Only static description of current circumstances rather than dynamic explanation of how circumstances came to be
3. Concept does not allow for diversity of experience within a particular life cycle state

Rowland (1991) suggests 5 family life cycle categories

1. Single person (non family)
2. Childless life cycle
3. Single-parent life cycle
4. Nuclear family life cycle
5. Step family life cycle

Experience of Pregnancy: Mother's Reactions

- Anxious about birth and responsibility of child