

Lifespan Development

PSY 210  
Chapter 1  
Introduction to Lifespan  
Psychology

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Lifespan developmental psychology

- changes that occur in our lives from conception until death
- womb to tomb
- What development is and is not...
- Case studies... Colin Powell

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Conceptualizing Lifespan Development

- Biology vs. Environment
  - Biology – considers genes as having a critical role
    - Renewed interest
  - Environment – Bronfenbrenner's systems theory (Bioecological)
    - Systems constantly interacting with one another

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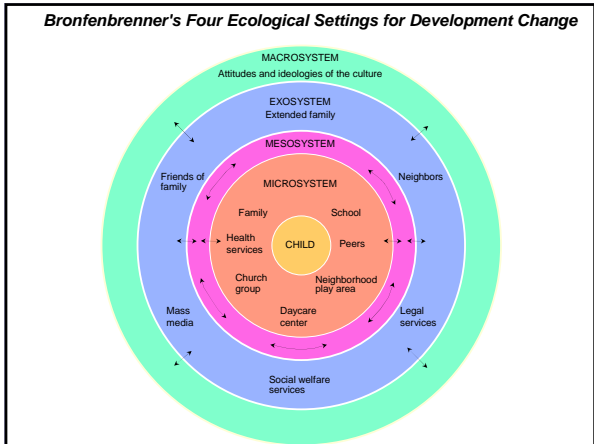
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### Reciprocal Interactions

- we impact on our environment and the environment, in turn having a changing influence on us
- endless succession of influences.
- biopsychosocial model
- very complex - potential influences & combinations

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### Biopsychosocial

- interplay of biological, psychological, and social aspects of development
- reminds us of complicated causal forces that produce our individuality
- different factors will be of most importance at different stages of life

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**Carving up the lifespan**

- Infancy (0-2)
- Early Childhood (2-6)
- Middle Childhood (7-11)
- Adolescence (12-18)
- Early Adulthood (19-34)
- Middle Adulthood (35-64)
- Late Adulthood (65+)

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**Culture**

- lens through which we view the world and how we operate in our environment
- stereotypes
- culture must always be considered

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**Cultures merging/intermixing**

- likely to increase
- no majority racial group in LA county

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## Lerner's Developmental Contextualism

### Considers multiple factors

- Where?
- Who?
  - Social influences
  - Ourselves as part of our context – personal characteristics
- When?

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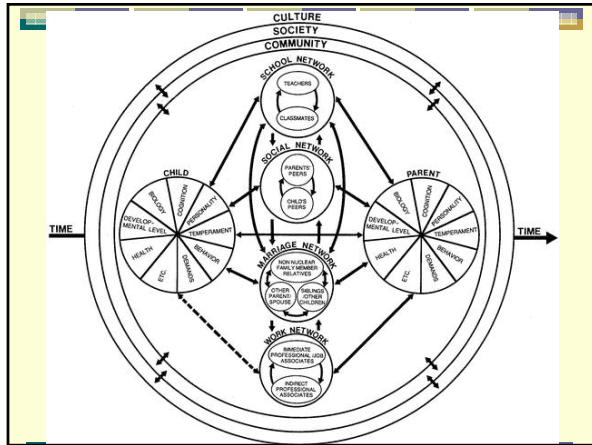
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## Basics of Lerner's theory

### Action of genes

- genetic expression affected by other levels of the system
- all levels of the system potentially equal

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**Basic change process**

- changes in the individual always occur in connection with changes in context
- changes in organism-context relations are the basic unit of change in development

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**Relational processes**

- fundamental process in development
- study of only a portion of this relational system measures an incomplete subprocess
- relational analysis - only sufficient approach in analysis of basic developmental processes

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**Type of research**

- multilevel, multivariate, and longitudinal investigations
- can accurately portray the coaction of variables at different levels over time

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### Multiple levels

- Organism
  - gene
  - cell
  - organ
- Context
  - significant other
  - family
  - social policies

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### Development: lawful yet individualized

- changes will not occur in the same way or at the same point in developmental history
- lawful individual differences
- not generic developmental trajectory

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### Four functions of model

- guide to the formulation of person-context relational questions
- limiting frame for generalizations based on any one investigation
- guide for the collaboration of scholars from different disciplines
- general template for "reduced" more empirically testable models

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## An example

- relationship between a specific aspect of the child's organismic individuality and a characteristic of the parent pertinent to that characteristic
- characteristics would be studied not only in relation to each other, but also in relation to the child's and parent's interactions with other contexts
- assessment would be conducted at several points in time

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## Lerner's conclusions

- biopsychosocial model - not simply something to play lip service to
- diversity and context matter tremendously
- core of what human development is all about

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## Recurrent themes

- Gender and development
- Continuity vs. discontinuity
- Stability vs. change
- Nature vs. Nurture

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**Gender and Development**

- Sex vs. gender
  - What is the difference?

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**Gender**

- psychosocial aspects of male or femaleness
- gender role
- stereotypes
- identity

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**Continuity vs. discontinuity**

- Continuity = slow, constant progression
- Discontinuity = discrete stages
- some polarization
- both are necessary

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## Stability vs. Change

- Enduring effects of early experience vs. the ability to overcome
- Resiliency
  - ability to change
  - there are limits
  - individual variability
  - What factors might account for differences?

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## Nature vs. nurture

- biology vs. environment debate
- both important and the effects of each are very difficult to separate
- biology probably dictates boundaries and our experiences and environment where we will fall

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## End Chapter One

- Be sure you have carefully reviewed and understand the concepts in the research methods section of Ch. 1, bring any questions to class.

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