Social Contexts and Socioemotional Development

Social Contexts of Development

- Families
- Peers
- Schools
Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory

Bronfenbrenner’s theory focuses on the social contexts in which people live and the people who influence their development.
Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory cont’d

**Microsystem:** *Direct interactions* with parents, teachers, peers, and others.

**Mesosystem:** *Linkages* between microsystems such as family and school, and relationships between students and peers.

**Exosystem:** Experiences in settings in which a child *does not* have an active role influence the child’s experiences.
Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory cont’d

**Macrosystem:** The broader culture in which students and teachers live.

**Chronosystem:** The sociohistorical conditions of a student’s development.
Bronfenbrenner’s Theory in the Classroom

- Think about children embedded in several environmental systems and influences
- Attend to connections between school and families
- Recognize the importance of community, culture, and socioeconomic status
Baumrind’s Parenting Styles

**Authoritative**
Parents are *nurturing and supportive, yet set limits*. *Children are self-reliant, get along with peers, and have high self-esteem.*

**Authoritarian**
Parents are *restrictive and punitive*. *Children tend to be socially incompetent, anxious, and exhibit poor communication skills.*

**Indulgent**
Parents are *highly involved but set few restrictions*. *Children have poor self-control.*

**Neglectful**
Parents are *uninvolved*. *Children have poor self-control, don’t handle independence well, and low achievement motivation.*
Asian American parents continue aspects of traditional Asian child-rearing practices sometimes described as authoritarian.

For many African American and Latino families, especially in low-income, dangerous neighborhoods, authoritarian child rearing may have positive effects.
The Changing Family

**Working parents**
- Nature of parents’ work matters

**Children in divorced families**
- The quality of parental relationships, timing of divorce, use of support systems, type of custody, SES, and quality schooling all affect children.
- Elementary school children did best when the parent and the school environment were *authoritative*.

**Children in stepfamilies**
- Show more adjustment problems than children in intact families, especially during adolescence.
Ethnic and Socioeconomic Variations in Families

**Minority students**
- Families tend to be larger; depend more on the extended family for support
- Single parents are more common
- Less educated; lower income

**Low-income parents**
- Tend to value external characteristics such as obedience and neatness
- See education as the teachers’ job
Ethnic and Socioeconomic Variations in Families

*Middle-class families*

- Often place high value on internal characteristics such as self-control and delayed gratification
- See education as a mutual responsibility
School-Family Linkages

*Family management practices* – important to have a structured/organized family environment

Positively related to students’ grades and self-responsibility

Negatively related to school-related problems and delinquency
School-Family-Community Linkages

- Provide assistance to families
- Communicate effectively with families about school programs and their child’s progress
- Include families as participants in school decisions
- Encourage parents to be volunteers
- Coordinate community collaboration
- Involve families with their children in learning activities at home
- Include families as participants in school decisions
Communicating with Parents about TV

- Monitor children’s viewing habits and plan what they will watch
- Look for programs that feature children in your child’s age group
- Make sure TV is not a substitute for other activities
- Discuss sensitive TV themes with your child, giving them an opportunity to ask questions
- Balance reading and TV activities
Peers

*Peers* are children of about the same age or maturity level.

Competence in peer relations is linked to whether children do well in school and later in life.

Having friends can be a developmental advantage, but not all friendships are the same.
Peer Statuses

**Popular**
Frequently nominated as best friend; rarely disliked by peers

**Neglected**
Infrequently “best friend”; not disliked by peers

**Average**
Receive both positive and negative peer nominations
Peer Statuses

**Rejected**
- Seldom "best friend";
- often actively disliked by peers

**Controversial**
- Frequently "best friend";
- often disliked by peers
Strategies for Improving Children’s Social Skills

- Help rejected children learn to listen to peers
- Help neglected children attract attention from peers in positive ways
- Provide children low in social skills with knowledge about how to improve these skills
- Read and discuss books on peer relations, devise supportive games and activities
Early Childhood and Elementary School

- Developmentally appropriate practices
- Early Childhood Approaches
  - Reggio Emilia
  - Montessori
  - Academic versus child-centered
- Transition to elementary schools
Schools for Adolescents

- Transition to Middle or Junior HS
  - Stressful due to developmental changes
  - Top-dog phenomenon
  - Academic challenge

- Carnegie Corporation 1989 Recommendations

- Improving America’s High Schools
  - High expectations for all students
  - Improve drop-out rates
Recommendations for Junior High, Middle Schools

- Develop smaller “communities” or “houses” to lessen the impersonal atmosphere
- Have lower student to counselor ratios
- Involve parents and community leaders in school
- Have teachers team teach in more flexible curriculum blocks that integrate several disciplines
- Curriculum and extra-curriculum activities should reflect the wide range of psychological & biological differences among the students
Recommendations for High Schools

- Early detention of children’s school-related difficulties
- Get children engaged with school in positive ways
- Keep students (at risk for dropping out) with the same teachers through their high school years
- Encourage adolescents to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities