

# Human development environment



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## **Human Development Environment**

Human Development or as it is more commonly known 'Developmental Psychology' is the scientific study of the progressive psychological development that occurs in human beings as they mature. Four central themes dominate developmental psychology. The first is whether children are qualitatively different from adults or simply lack the experience that adults draw upon. The second concerns whether development occurs through the gradual accumulation of knowledge or through shifts from one stage of thinking to another. The third concerns whether children are born with innate knowledge or figure things out through experience. A fourth and last significant area of research examines social contexts that affect development.

Historically, developmental psychologists took extreme positions with regard to most aspects of human development. These positions centred around the dominance of "nature versus nurture" or nativism versus empiricism. A nativist account of development argued that the processes in question are innate, that is development is influenced by an individual's genes. An empiricist position argued that development is acquired with interaction with the whole environment. More recently developmental psychologists' research has focused on the interrelationship between innate and environmental influences.

In this assignment I will be identifying, comparing and contrasting 3 models of human development. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Maori perspectives in Whare Tapawha and Samoan perspectives of human

development Faasamoa. Where appropriate Maori and Samoan terms relating to human development and holistic health will be used.

Holistic health is a philosophy of medical care that views physical and mental aspects of life as closely interconnected and equally important approaches to treatment. Holism as a health concept has long existed outside of academic circles, but only relatively recently has the modern medical establishment begun to integrate it into the mainstream health care system

### **Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

Urie Bronfenbrenner is one of the world's leading developmental psychologists. In 1979 he published his Ecological Systems Theory in his landmark work 'The Ecology of Human Development'. Bronfenbrenner describes four types of interlocked systems. He called these the micro system (such as the family or classroom), the mesosystem (which is two microsystems in interaction), the exosystem (external environments which indirectly influence development, e. g., parental workplace), and the macro system (the larger socio-cultural context).

He later added a fifth system, called the Chronosystem (the progression of the external system over time). Each system contains roles, norms and rules that can powerfully shape development. It has been said that “ before Bronfenbrenner, child psychologists studied the child, sociologists examined the family, anthropologists the society, economists the economic framework of the times, and political scientists the political structure” Urie Bronfenbrenner . (22 May 2008). Retrieved May 24th, 2008, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urie\\_Bronfenbrenner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urie_Bronfenbrenner).

There are many effects that occur from cross-level influences and relationships between and among levels that Ecological Systems Theory. Relationships include parallels, discontinuities or cross-level effects. The concentric circles of the Ecological Systems Theory shows the spheres of influences (see appendix A). The single direction arrows indicate cross-level effects, whereas the circular arrows indicate isomorphisms (an isomorphism is a kind of mapping between objects, which shows a relationship between two properties or operations) or discontinuities. Each band operates fully within the next larger sphere. That is both physical emotional and mental elements as well as interconnectedness between various systems must be in relational harmony in order for an individual to thrive. See appendix A

An individual's personal biology may be regard as part of the micro system. Each system is built up of roles, customs, and rules that powerfully influence development. Human development theorists rely heavily on metaphor. The theorists themselves were perhaps mindful of the importance of metaphor in educating readers about their views, since most theorists were also educators Bird (2003). At the same time metaphors have become suggestive in popular cultural understandings of development, including the aforementioned Bronfenbrenner's nested Russian dolls. Bronfenbrenner considered the individual, organization, community, and culture to be nested factors, like Russian dolls.

Bronfenbrenner's ' bioecological' approach to human development broke down barriers among the social sciences and developed links between various disciplines. As a result of this groundbreaking work in " human ecology", these environments, from the family to economic and political

organizations have come to be seen as part of the life course of childhood through to adulthood. They intersect and interact with each other to form a “holistic” unit of experience.

### **Maori Perspective of Human Development**

In New Zealand there are longstanding Maori views of childhood, family life and changes in the life course. A metaphor for Maori perspectives in human development has been developed. The formalisation of the national curriculum on Maori early childhood principles is known as Te Whaariki (literally, reference to a mat made of interwoven flax fronds). It is now used to demonstrate the interweaving of some euro-western perspectives on development with those identified by Maori.

Te harakeke (New Zealand flax) holds a reverend place in Maoridom and features in many crucial whakatauki (Maori proverbs) that are relevant for human development. The tangled leaves, a central core that is traditionally preserved, outer leaves that may be used for the weaving of mats, clothing and many other items have become central metaphors in both Maori education and development.

The Poutama pattern of a flax mat, signifying the growth of an individual can be looked at from four dimensions – Tinana (Physical), Hinengaro (Intellectual), Whatumanawa (emotional), and Wairua (spiritual) with time, teaching and practice being the major factors on when a new layer is ascended (Tangaere 1996). A Maori child (tamariki) moves through these facets as he or she is scaffolded in their learning by their kaiako (teacher).

The kaiako withdraws as the child becomes more proficient in their development and moves up in their Poutama. The tamariki's next step may be as tuakana (mentor) and from there he or she may even become kaiako. The tuakana/teina relationship with the older sibling or adult guiding the younger has long been entrenched in Maoritanga.

Vygotsky's had a similar theory for learning and development. His Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) showed that once a child understood a task or activity (with appropriate educational scaffolding) they would ascend the next step in the hierarchy of development.

Within the centre of the whanau structure you have the child who is supported by their tuakana, who in turn are supported by the parents, who are supported by the grandparents. Some individuals play multiple roles i. e. parent, tuakana, teina and child. Interwoven into Te Ao Maori (Maori Culture) is whanau, marae, hapu and iwi all supporting one another? The child learns the importance of each area and the relationships between them.

Whanau (the extended family) always remain the central point in Maoridom but the others all have important places in an individual's life at different times. "The individual can never be seen as separate from their wider constituent parts (Tangaere 1996)". An individual's physical spiritual and emotional health is central to development.

### **Whare Tapawha**

Using their traditional worldview Maori have developed a model of health that can be used as a holistic or unified theory of health that mirrors human development models. Dr. Mason Durie has been presenting an integrated

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approach to healthcare for more than twenty-five years. His model, known as Te Whare Tapa Wha, brings together the physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions of health and healing. It is a holistic perspective on body and mind that marries both the ancient and the modern.

Dr Mason Durie's whare tapawha model compares hauora to the four walls of a whare (meeting house) (see appendix B), each wall representing a different dimension: taha wairua (the spiritual side); taha hinengaro (thoughts and feelings); taha tinana (the physical side); and taha whanau (family). All four dimensions are necessary for strength and symmetry. Durie's Whare Tapawha model differs from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems in terms of individuation and interdependence.

From the Maori perspective an individual develops their individuality via interaction within the community as a whole (interdependence). Conformity to social norms is the developmental goal. In Bronfenbrenner's model such individuation occurs in order to be a member of a community. Individuation is the developmental goal. Whare Tapawha is truly a holistic model with both the physical and the spiritual and ecological sides to development covered.

Where Whare Tapawha lacks some strength is the scientific descriptions of how learning occurs in a Maori environment. Also as Bird and Drewery point out there is great " . . . diversity within Maori culture, different tribes have different understandings . . . (p60)" which this model is unable to take into account.

That said both systems are very complementary to each other. One could see Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems as the skeleton on which Whare  
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Tapawha hung. The Ecological System giving the foundation to how learning occurs in a given society whilst Whare Tapawha elicits the details and provides the guts of a holistic system.

## **Samoan Perspectives of Human Development**

### **Faasamoa**

There is a paucity of research and understanding into Samoan perspectives of human development. David Lui is a mental health professional in Auckland who has developed the Fa'asamoa model in an attempt to describe how human development is viewed from Samoan perspective. Fa'asamoa is a word that refers to the Samoan way of life. The three basic values of Samoan Culture are: Alofa, (love) is the concept of giving, receiving and sharing of gifts. The second value Faaaloalo (respect) is the foundation of good relationships.

Relationships bind everyone and everything together. In health, the traditional healers (Taulasea) provide their service out of their love for people and their desire to help them. This skill of healing is handed down through the generations. The third value is Fa'amagalalo (forgiveness). If a person breaks a tapu, and finds themselves outside of the correct relational arrangement protocols and etiquettes allow the person to return to the correct relational arrangement. The individual can seek forgiveness (fa'amagaloga) by undergoing the process of fa'atoesega (formal apology) in order to rebuild relational bonds. The process of fa'atoesega is an appeal to a person's sense of forgiveness (fa'amagalalo).



**Family**

In Samoa the unit of society is the family not the individual. . Samoan culture puts emphasis on family and interdependence between individuals. In Samoa everyone belongs to a family. Your family is your refuge. Families make up the wider community. Family is made up of individuals. These individuals are held together by relationships (Va). Every relationship is sacred (Tapu or Sa ) Every relationship has boundaries, which are defined by Tapu and Sa. Breaching the tapu can result in a curse being brought upon a person. On the other hand, maintaining good relations can bring blessings (Faamanuiaga). One of the . . .” principal duties of a Samoan parent is to impart cultural knowledge and cultural references “. . . to the young (Lui 2008).

**Decision-making**

Soalaupule is the process for reaching. The matais (chiefs) and elders take the lead but all adult family members’ opinions are valued. The participants continue discussion and debate until they come to a consensus based decision. Soalaupule is not so much about reaching a consensus of opinion as it is about process for agreeing on a way forward. Participants do not necessarily agree to have the same viewpoint/opinion but there is agreement on how to proceed.

These processes allow families and individuals to resolve issues and maintain good relations. The cultural process results in win/win situations and all parties can move forward with no hard feelings. Motive is also very important in a Samoan family’s decision making process. A family must satisfied that

non family member's intentions are sincere and genuine before allowing them more intimate contact within the family (Lui 2003).

### **Cultural Knowledge and Identity**

All cultural learning in Faasamoa starts in the family home. It is the arena where knowledge about health, decision-making, culture, social issues, health, conflict resolution and life itself is learned Like Maori Tanga, knowledge of your family's history or tupuaga, gafa and genealogy gives meaning to ones name and defines an individuals place there family and society.

### **Health**

Health is achieved when there are positive and balanced relationships between three interlocking elements: Atua (God), Tagata (people) and Laufanua (land/environment). The relationships between these three elements are holistic and defined and guarded by tapu. Relationship between people in the community is paramount. In Samoa every relationship is sacred (tapu), and every relationship has boundaries. These are also defined and guarded by tapu.

David Lui Fa'asamoa model shares many similarities with Mason Duries Whare Tapawha. Both see individuation coming from within community. Faasamoa is an interdependent developmental pathway, with social obligations and responsibilities given priority. The individual in his or her own cultural micro system is constantly shaped, not only by the environment, but by any encounter or other individual they come in contact with. This shaping is well explored and it would be unreasonable to believe a child is solely a product of the societal environment.

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## **Conclusions**

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems focuses on an individual's relationship within his/her social contexts . Human development occurs in a set of overlapping ecological systems. Independent developmental pathways and social obligations are individually negotiated, freedom of choice rules. Individuation is the developmental goal. It is a holistic system in that all of its parts (systems) operate together to influence what a person becomes as he/she develops.

Within Whare Tapawha and Fa'asamoa, interdependent developmental pathways, social obligations and responsibilities are given priority.

Conformity to social norms is the developmental goal. The young Maori or Samoan person is also the product of the confluence of the different parts of the cultural system which influence their development. Culture and biology are irrevocably intertwined.

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