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## Interlude

In this chapter, Quickfall provides not simply an explanation of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory, but using the 1980s family film *The Goonies*, demonstrates how the theory can be deployed to elucidate the complexity of a person’s development. Using a conversational style, which is quite acceptable in academic writing if you know where to submit it, Quickfall gives Bronfenbrenner status as a theorist worth knowing. She explains that his theory is capable of capturing some of the complexity of childhood development and is often misunderstood. The former makes Bronfenbrenner useful for social theorists to bring psychological understandings about childhood development to their research. The latter is all the more reason to include him in an explainer.

Quickfall brings Bronfenbrenner and *The Goonies* together at multiple points throughout the chapter, using the events of a main character and Goonie, Mikey as the key to unlocking the theory. The key point the Quickfall makes in this explanatory text, is that Bronfenbrenner’s theory is usually only considered by social theorists so far as elucidating the context of an individual’s development. Understandably this has had Bronfenbrenner criticised for being too general. Quickfall defends the theorist explaining that the other aspects of his theory, time, process and person, are essential for rigorously using Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory in social research.

### “Down here, it’s our time”: Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems and ‘The Goonies’

Aimee Quickfall



**Choose your own filter:** Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory addresses concerns about complexity reduction in our analysis of society, relationships and understanding. Because he loves complexity, he accounts for almost everything you can think of, including INTERSECTIONALITY, GENDER, CULTURE. He has links with \*\*\*\*\* (insert theorists from other chapters)

In this chapter, I am going to introduce you to a well-loved movie of the 1980s and an equally well-loved theory from child development, which can also be used for thinking about complex systems in society. My assertion is that Bronfenbrenner’s theory has been given a reductive handling, which means the nuances are lost in many examples of its use and description. In this chapter the theory will be explored so that it can be considered more fairly as a useful resource for sociologists, psychologists and pedagogues.

There are some good reasons to put the theory and the film together:

1. Both capture some of the complexity of childhood (or adulthood, perhaps);
2. Both are often misrepresented as simple views of childhood (or life);
3. Both are part of the story of the best decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yes, it really was.

Before we start, it would be useful to watch *The Goonies* as the theory will be explored here with direct reference to events in the film. It is also useful to watch *The Goonies* as it is a funny, silly movie that works very well on a rainy afternoon, and now you can claim to be **doing sociology** whilst you are watching it. We will look at how events, relationships and understanding in the movie can be modelled using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems, and also think about where the limitations of this theory are, highlighted by the story and characters from *The Goonies*.

Bronfenbrenner's theory is not limited to studies of early childhood or child psychology; it has been applied to adult lives (Hoare, 2009) and to explore the spheres of influence on people working in schools (Kell, 2016). You may come across ecological systems theory in psychology, sociology, education and gender studies.

### **THE GOONIES (1985)**

Again, I urge you to watch this movie, if not for greater investment in this chapter, just for your own entertainment. But if you can't watch it, here is a brief summary of what happens and who is involved...but as Bronfenbrenner would undoubtedly point out, life is very complex and there is no substitute for actually experiencing it first-hand.

*The Goonies* is best described as an action-adventure-comedy, and is set in a small town; Astoria, in 1980s America. The area of town where our story is set – the 'Goon Docks', is undergoing redevelopment and the families there are faced with imminent foreclosure and

movement out of town (it is funny, honestly). The story follows a group of children on an adventure, attempting to discover the treasure of a local 16<sup>th</sup> century pirate, 'One-Eyed Willy', who is part of the myth and legend of the town.

As a child of the 1980s, I watched *The Goonies* at a local (probably illegal) cinema that some local shifty characters had set up in an abandoned church hall. Which in itself sounds like the beginning of a *Goonies* sequel. At the time, I felt it was very much a movie aimed at children my age (I was 8 when I first saw it) but after watching it many times as an adult, I think if you are going to watch it with little people around, be aware that it contains some strong language, some mild to medium peril and a dead body in an ice-cream freezer.

\*Spoilers about The Goonies follow – skip to page \*\* if you want to watch the movie later!\*

### **The Characters**

The children who make up 'The Goonies' are all very distinct and unique characters, and time is spent during the first 20 minutes of the film exploring these differences and skillsets as the narrative of foreclosure, imminent change to their way of life is exposed, seen from the viewpoint of the children themselves with their understanding of the issues as the focus. Our main protagonist, Mikey (a very young Sean Astin), is a quiet, shy and irrepressibly optimistic boy. His older brother, Brandon (Josh Brolin) represents the transition from childhood to adulthood, with his obvious care for the younger kids. Mouth (Corey Feldman) is streetwise, smart talking. Data (Jonathan Ke Quan) is a creative, inventive genius. Chunk (Jeff Cohen) is honest to a fault, big hearted and unable to stop talking. Later we meet the girl Goonies – Andy and Stef (Kerri Green and Martha Plimpton) who are Brandon's age and join the rest of the gang by accident.

\*\*\*\* insert drawing of The Goonies here – AQ to provide\*\*\*\*

### **The Plot**

The plot, in a nutshell, sees the Goonies discovering a pirate map and a doubloon which they believe could lead them to treasure that will help them save their town. They follow the map to an abandoned restaurant where they meet up with Brandon, who has been chasing after them, Stef and Andy. They quickly find out that the restaurant is the hideout of a family of criminals – The Fratellis – who we realise were involved in police chase at the beginning of the film. The Goonies (minus Chunk) manage to escape from the Fratellis by dodging down into a hidden tunnel. Chunk is kept prisoner with the gigantic and deformed Sloth, the youngest Fratelli brother. The rest of the Fratellis chase the Goonies through a series of booby-trapped tunnels, solving tests to avoid One Eyed Willy's cunning traps and tricks. They eventually reach a huge cavern where the pirate ship is moored, and is full of pirate treasure! The Fratellis set off a final booby-trap which the cavern caved in, but with Sloth's intervention, the Goonies and Fratellis escape onto the beach. They are met by the Goonie parents and the police, who arrest the Fratellis apart from Sloth, who is going to live with Chunk. The parents halt the foreclosure signing just in time after finding precious jewels stashed in Mikey's marble bag. The final scene is of the pirate ship, The Inferno, sailing out to sea, unmanned.

### **A bit about our theorist...**

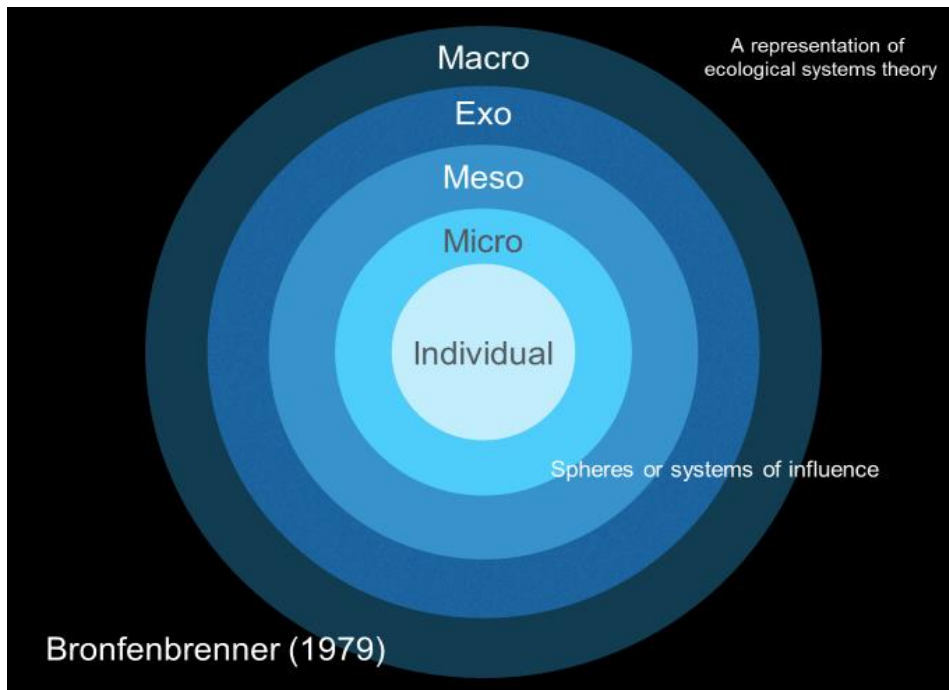
Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) was a Russian psychologist who is most famous for ecological systems theory, which is what we are applying *The Goonies* to in this chapter. He worked extensively with the US government on their 'Head Start' early childhood education programme and believed that a complex web of interacting social and environmental systems influence our development. He rejected the developmental psychology of the time and the tendency for researchers to study children in strange environments (eg labs) carried out by strangers (the researchers) whilst expecting to see 'normal' behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

### **Ecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that the world of the individual can be theorised as an ecological system, where the interaction of different factors, people, objects and characteristics influence how a child will or will not develop. Bronfenbrenner encouraged educationalists and psychologists to view the individual child as being at the centre of such complex systems, and to acknowledge and analyse the systems which constitute their environments and how they interact when trying to understand the child and their personal challenges.

*'Interpersonal relationships, even the smallest level of the parent-child relationship, did not exist in a social vacuum but were embedded in the larger social structures of community, society, economics and politics.'* (Kohn cited by Woo, 2005, para.5).

I find ecological systems (and most theories) are usually easier to understand as a diagram, and if you do an internet search for Bronfenbrenner, you will probably see something like this:



*Figure 1: An interpretation of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979)*

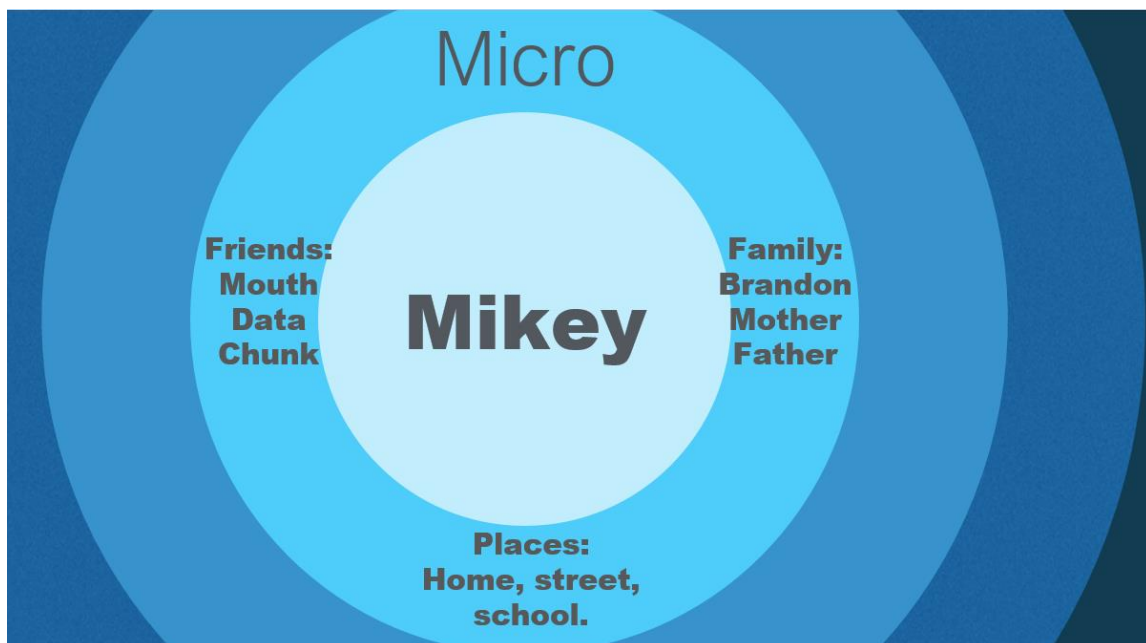
It is really important to point out here that the classic diagram of ever decreasing circles is just one part of the theory, which actually has three other major interconnecting parts. This diagram represents the **CONTEXT** part of the ecological systems. We will come to the others later in the chapter, but it is useful to bear in mind that often when people discuss Bronfenbrenner's theory they are talking about this quarter of it. When you join in these discussions, you can now point out wisely that this isn't the whole story!

The diagram really only starts to make sense when you think about a specific example, applied to it. You can try this with your own ecological system at the end of the chapter.

Let's populate this model with some of what we know about Mikey's world, which will help to show what may be included in each part of the ecological system.

**A word about systems:** Like you would expect in a complex theory trying to capture the complexity of a highly complex system (arghh!) the terms and phrases used in the theory can quickly add to an over-complication. With this theory, one of the most difficult to pin down terms is 'systems'. In the literature, you will read about overarching systems (such as the microsystem in our diagram) and then read about microsystems within this microsystem. In this chapter I have referred to these microsystems in the microsystem as **aspects**, as I think it is easier to understand. As an example, at the microsystem level, an individual will have lots of 'microsystems' or aspects – school, home, grandma's home, friends (and perhaps many different groups of friends). Be aware that if you read widely on the theory, you will see micro/meso/exo and macro system as an overarching term and as a subset of those systems, too.

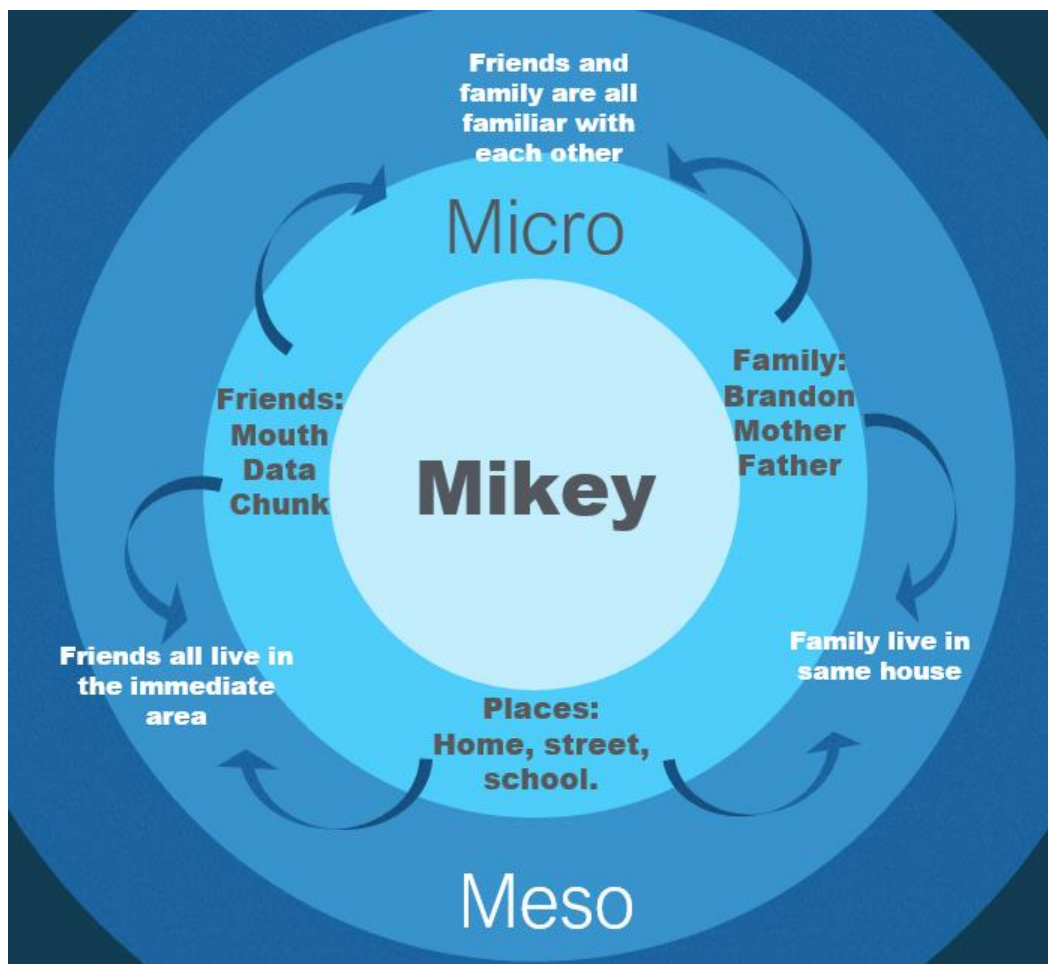
We are starting with Mikey as our individual, hence locating him at the centre of a complex system of influences (he is the main protagonist of the tale, although the Goonies are a fairly democratic gang – like pirates!) and begin by looking at the basics of his **microsystem** – **the most familiar things in his world:**



Now, between Mikey and his microsystem, there are many **processes**; interactions, relationships, experiences that help Mikey to understand the world and to develop. His relationship with Brandon, although stereotypically boisterous, is caring; that hug between brothers when things start going wrong can be viewed as part of Mikey's development. His trust in his friends, and sense of comfort around them is a good indication that they also

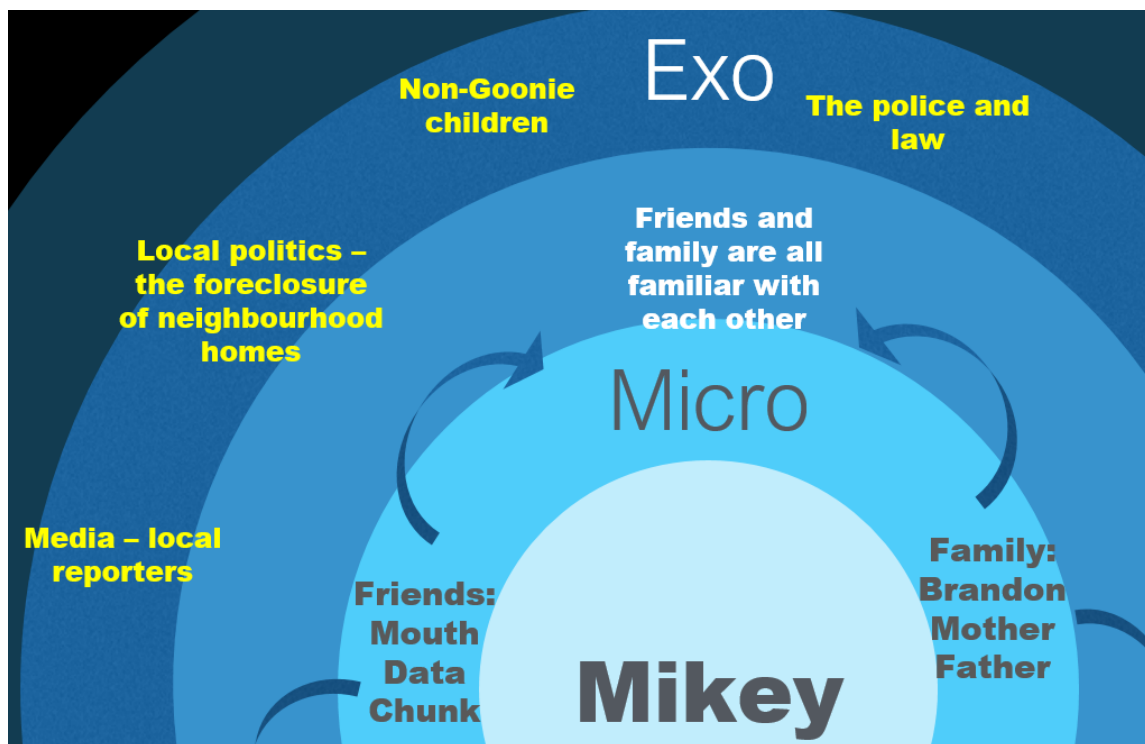


reside in his microsystem. He also influences his microsystem. For example, Mikey's knowledge of local legends, passed to him by his father, changes the understanding of the world for his friends. In terms of environments, the story begins at Mikey's home, where he has in depth understanding of the traditions, rules and objects that constitute its character. He also has a deep understanding of his family; his horror at the damage to his mother's statue (and particularly her favourite part of the statue) when it is dropped early in the film, displays his awareness.



The mesosystem is where aspects of the microsystem interact, i.e. how those people and places who interact with Mikey, themselves interact with each other thereby influencing his experiences and development. If you think about The Goonies, this happens in the environment when Mouth, Data and Chunk enter Mikey's house. It can also involve less

easy to observe interactions which add to the complexity of how a mesosystem builds up. For example, Mouth has a relationship with Mikey's mother and it develops when he offers to translate her English into Spanish for Rosalita, the family's housekeeper. Mouth's mischievous translation (he deliberately mistranslates some innocuous directions into instructions about hiding drugs), also sets up a whole different understanding of the family and house for Rosalita. This in turn has influences and effects on Mikey's experience and relationship with Rosalita right the way through to the final minutes of the movie. It is Rosalita who is suspiciously searching through his pockets and find the marble bag full of precious gems. It also becomes clear that how the aspects of the microsystem interact is very different for every person. If Mikey's parents lived separately, the interaction between those aspects (the mother microsystem, the father microsystem) would be different, happen at different times, places and by different means. The relationship between parents would also be different, and have an influence on Brandon and Mikey in different ways.



The exosystem characterises the systems that the individual child is not in direct contact with, but which they will still feel the influence of, even if they don't fully comprehend what they are or what they do. For example, in terms of local politics, the foreclosure of the houses in the Goon Docks by a developer is not a situation that Mikey has direct contact with – it seems unlikely that he has been to council meetings or engaged in the discussions the adults are having about this. But he and the rest of the Goonies understand the impact the local politics will have on their ecological systems. They know they are going to have to move house, possibly to other towns, attend different schools and be moved away from their friends. When they come across the Fratelli's hide out, they draw upon local media reports and police car sirens to work out who the Fratellis might be and why they need to be wary of them.



The macrosystem concerns the overarching culture that influences the individual, in this case, Mikey. The macrosystems have their own links to the micro and meso system. For

example, a legend of Astoria, embedded within the local culture, is that of One-Eyed Willy, the pirate. This legend has its own place in Mikey's microsystem, as his Dad has told him stories about the pirate and brought this aspect of local culture into his familiar world. It also appears in the mesosystem, when Mikey and his friends find the treasure map and begin comparing their understanding of the legend (and scepticism about its origin and reliability).

Another example of a macrosystem at work is the socioeconomic culture that Mikey has grown up in. The community and family are not economically secure and clues to this pepper the script; Brandon has been saving up for a long time to buy tyres for his bike, for example. However, another part of their community culture is a sense of fairness and justice. It is tricky to tell whether this is shared by everyone, but when the Goonies find themselves in the town wishing well whilst exploring the tunnels, Mikey petitions them not to take the pennies that have been thrown in, as these are other people's wishes. There are other children in Astoria who do not share the same macrosystem culture as the Goonies – when Andy's peers try to get her to leave the rest of the Goonies at the wishing well, they clearly don't share the same moral beliefs as the gang. For them, there may be macrosystems they share with Mikey, but others that are different — this is possible even in a small close-knit community.

### **The Overlooked Three Quarters of the Theory**

What we have just looked at, through the lens of The Goonies, is one part of a four-part theory:



Bronfenbrenner added to his theory over time and called this evolved model a bioecological model of human development (Ashiabi & O’Neal, 2015; Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Whilst very often the theory is used as if only the ‘context’ quarter existed (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield & Karnik, 2009) it is likely that some of the perceived weaknesses in the model are due to just one dimension of it being considered. As we look at the rest of the theory, using The Goonies of course, you will begin to see how the ‘context’ when taken alone strips out much of the complexity that the theory attempts to represent.

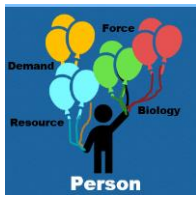
## Process



In the process part of the ecological systems model, Bronfenbrenner accounts for how processes drive development of the individual. He talks about proximal processes, theorising that the interactions in the immediate environment of a child are the basis for human development (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). Through our discussion of the context part of the theory so far, we have instinctively and naturally brought in processes to the model. For example, when we think about Mikey's interactions with his friends., Mikey and his friends talk to each other, they look at each other, smile, laugh, play, joke, listen, tease and chastise each other – all within the first few minutes of the film. These processes are an integral part of the context – the micro, meso, exo and macro system require processes to make them meaningful.

Processes can also occur between the individual and objects, not just people. Mikey's interactions with the map are a good example of how he develops through a process, studying the map to find clues. He does not do this in isolation, so in his microsystem and mesosystem, interactions between his friends, objects (the map and the doubloon) through processes of discussion, manipulation, testing, observing. To then further complicate things, processes are also varied by form, power, content and direction. The characteristics of the individual and their environment change aspects of proximal processes. As an example from the film, Mikey takes charge in the caves and picks a nook for 'a little girl's room' and one for a 'little boy's room'. The form of this process is talk, but the power of Mikey's talk is diluted by his age and lack of assertiveness —, the male Goonies end up following Brandon into the 'men's room' instead.

## Person



The person element of the theory concerns the individual at the centre of the ecological system in terms of context, time and process; it addresses the complexity of uniqueness.

This element has four sub-elements: demand, resource, force; which are under an umbrella of 'personal characteristics', and biological and genetic factors.

**Demand:** the immediately obvious characteristics of a person, or easy to find out information about them. For example, Mikey is white, male, 13 years old and we know what he looks like. As we know from many research studies, personal accounts and historical facts, how you look can have a huge impact in what your life is like and your experience of other people and systems. From being more likely to receive help if you are perceived as physically attractive (West & Brown, 1975), or well-dressed (Carvalho, Hildebrand & Sen, 2019), to being more likely to experience disrespect and condescension as a person of colour with a darker skin tone (Keith, Nguyen, Taylor, Mouzon & Chatters, 2017), the demand of the individual is very important to a theory on how a person develops.

**Resource:** As mentioned previously, Mikey's family are in a precarious socio-economic position throughout the film and it seems obvious that this aspect of Mikey's life is bound to have an influence on how he develops and how we view his world. This is only a small part of the considerations of resource, however. Bronfenbrenner also takes into account mental and emotional resources, past experience, social resources and intelligence, other skills as well as material resources. As we get to know Mikey over the course of the story, it

becomes evident that his mental and emotional resources make a difference to how he develops and interacts with his ecological system. Mikey is optimistic and resilient. He won't give up on his dreams and thus manages to convince others to follow his lead, using social skills as well as boundless positivity. His past experiences, such as his knowledge of local legends and strategies for evading babysitters, mean that The Goonies come through their adventure alive, but also enable the adventure to happen in the first place and for the children to save the Goon Docks. It seems that the other Goonies trust in Mikey's intelligence, even when they think his schemes are wild or very unlikely to pay off. Another theorist, Bourdieu, talks about social, cultural and symbolic resources as types of capital and you can read more about him in chapter (\*\*).

**Force:** Whilst *demand* and *resource* relate to aspects of the person can affect how others perceive them, force is more of a two-way street. Force pertains to the temperament, motivation, persistence and capacity to bring about change, both actively and passively that a person has. Mikey appears to be resilient and persistent with his friends, who then tend to go along with him, and in turn set off a multitude of other processes in Mikey's development. It seems unlikely that Mikey is faking his resilient nature, given the number of opportunities he has to go home and abandon the adventure; however, Mikey could be faking that resilience. What he really feels is his individual force. How Mikey feels about himself is a great contributor to how he develops and others will have perceptions of what Mikey is really like, based on their experiences of him, which contribute to their own microsystem and mesosystem processes.. Mikey models active and passive change to the environment throughout the film; for example, active change occurs when planning and executing a plan to get Chunk to smash the framed picture.



**Biological Factors:** Bronfenbrenner seems to downplay biological factors in his writing about the theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), and certainly there are overlaps between biology and other aspects, such as demand and resource. Bronfenbrenner acknowledges that there are genetic factors that influence development, from major factors like a hereditary disease, to interesting but ultimately less impactful quirks like being able to roll your tongue. Mikey suffers from asthma and uses his inhaler nine times during the film, but at the end of the film he throws his inhaler away, suggesting that what he has been through renders it useless; perhaps an example of Mikey overcoming biological factors with his force and resource. Mikey also has the interesting situation of having his brother in the gang which would affect his development but, despite being two genetically similar people Mikey and Brandon are very different people, with different interests, physical characteristics and abilities. Where they are similar, it would seem to be non-genetic factors, such as their ethical stance and attachment to their community that they have in common. So, while Bronfenbrenner acknowledges the influence of genetics and biology, the film also shows why he might downplay them.

## Time



Time in Bronfenbrenner's theory is broken down into micro-time, meso-time, macro-time and the chronosystem.

Micro-time is specific to a proximal process in the microsystem, so those interactions in the most familiar systems of your life. Micro-time feels like it passes much faster or slower than

clock-time, which explains the feeling of time passing so quickly when learning something new, or how slowly time can seem to pass when something sad has happened. The series of micro-time events that make up the adventure the Goonies go on actually covers a very short time frame, just as it covers a very small geographical area – they never leave the town, and the whole adventure happens in less than 24 hours.

The meso-system is about the familiar repetitions of micro-time events. Meso-time is about the consistency of interaction, the repetitions of events in what we might call normal life.

For the developing child, this might be about the routines of early childhood from waking up to going to bed, but it also covers consistency of interaction with others as well as routines involving objects (like toothbrushes and pyjamas!). In an example from the film, Mikey talks movingly about how their routines are going to change if the Goonies abandon their mission – the next test they take will be in another school.

Macro-time, also known as the chronosystem, is about the changes to the whole **context** of the individual over time. The chronosystem describes how the rest of the ecological system changes over time, and more specifically, the lifetime of the individual. This aspect was added to the theory later (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, 1995). I think of this as taking a snapshot of the whole ecological system every time it changes, and those changes over time make the chronosystem. In an example from *The Goonies*, at the beginning of the film, Mikey's microsystem of friends includes Chunk, Mouth and Data. By halfway through the film, Andy and Stef would be included in Mikey's Goonie microsystem. Furthermore, Mikey's ecological systems changed a lot: his understanding of the legend of One Eyed Willy; his understanding of his environment in terms of the security of their home; AND the geographical information about the town that he didn't know before. His relationships with his friends and family

have changed, he has new friends, too. Mikey also created ripples out into the systems – so instead of outside factors like the media, local politics and institutions having ripples inwards that affect him, he has influenced how they think and behave — by going missing, finding the treasure and ultimately saving the Goon Docks from demolition. He has become a part of the local media coverage in the exosystem of others, and a part of the local legends of the town.

### **Limitations of the Theory**

Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems has been criticised, often with only one aspect of the theory considered; in this section we will explore some of the limitations and critiques, and begin to address these. Further reading at the end of the chapter will signpost where you can find out more about these critiques. Ecological systems theory is often reduced to one aspect, but has also been adapted and repurposed, or combined with other theories, and criticism may be levelled at a subsequent version of the theory to the one Bronfenbrenner outlined (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, 1995, 2000). Legitimate limitations are pointed out in the literature, most notably in the following:

#### **Theory is too broad/oversimplified**

Bronfenbrenner's theory has come under fire for both being too broad in scope and also oversimplifying the world of the individual. Perhaps because for some complexity theorists, the theory reduces incredibly complex processes, like learning, to a system of factors. Conversely, for some cognitive psychologists it covers too much to be useful. Although Bronfenbrenner's theory has been criticised for being oversimplified (Kell, 2016) it gives a framework for thinking about the complexity an individual world, particularly when the whole theory is used. This also sits with intersectionality and a perspective of power as a

dynamic process (Bilge, 2013). Bilge discusses how intersectionality works at a microsocial and macrosocial level (2010 p.58), reminiscent of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems.

### **Detail required is too extensive**

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems are also criticised for requiring too much detail in practice. As an example, we have just applied a movie character to the theory, which wasn't too hard, but applying a real child, with all the interactions, context and other factors would make the theory very difficult to use as a full model for analysis of a specific life. However, it can be argued that Bronfenbrenner never expected this theory to become a form filling exercise in collecting all the information about a child in order to analyse their ecosystem or predict their future. What he perhaps set out to do with this theory is show how complex and delicate the process of development is, and how small interactions in the microsystem have huge impacts.

### **Crossing of boundaries between systems is too complex**

Another critique of the theory is that crossing between the ecosystems is complex and never fully explained. For example, how do ideas from the macrosystem filter through to the microsystem and the individual. There are also some grey areas where it can be tricky to decide where in the ecological system some aspects of life should go. For example, how are the not 'standard' relationships a child dealt with?. If you have never met your father, does he belong in the microsystem, or the macrosystem as something of a myth? Again, this critique seems to arise when the theory is pressed into use as a methodical, step-by-step guide to child development. Bronfenbrenner's point is to explore just how complex, interconnected and tangled a life can be, as a sort of antidote to theories that reduced development of the individual to single factors such as genetics, parenting style or

environment. Bronfenbrenner attempts to capture something of the wealth of factors that influence how we learn and grow, which whilst flawed, can be viewed as a refreshing change to treating individuals as machines that can be programmed.

### **Lack of power for children in the theory**

Some suggest that children lack power in the theory. The suggestion within this critique is that Bronfenbrenner misses a trick on children changing the world, rather than being changed by it; that a child in this theory is being 'done to' rather than having any agency of their own. A lot of discussion around the theory, by Bronfenbrenner and others, is about how the young child is influenced and affected by the factors included in the theory; but it is a fundamental misreading of the theory to suggest that the individual at the centre (of one aspect of the framework!) does not have an effect on their ecosystem. As we have explored using the example of Mikey, the child in question can have influence and affect in their micro and meso systems, just as Mikey does with his friends, family and community. He also has influence and effect on the exo and macro systems – as he has (perhaps for a short time) changed the news reporting in the community, which will now include him and his friends in the reports they are hearing. Local legends have been changed forever as Mikey and the rest of the Goonies have revealed the truth about One-Eyed-Willy and the pirate ship, and have also saved the Goon Docks – the local legends of the future that Mikey interacts with will include him as a local hero. Another counter-argument to this critique is that Bronfenbrenner's model is about the individual, a lot of Mikey's influence in the world will occur in the micro and meso systems of other people more than it does in his ecological systems.

**Try this at home, kids:** Try constructing your own ecological system. Put you (and perhaps an amusing photo/drawing) at the centre and think about the microsystems that are your closest and most familiar interactions with people and places. Work your way out, following the system descriptions in this chapter. Now think about how PROCESS, PERSON and TIME work in those systems. It is likely that very rapidly you will need a bigger sheet of paper!

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored Bronfenbrenner's theory, looking at the most famous quarter of it, and expanding to consider the whole. We have addressed some of the critiques of the theory, which in some part have come about because the theory is often reduced to one aspect of the framework. Weaknesses persist, of course – but I hope that this has helped to clarify where the weaknesses address the theory, rather than a simplified version of events! In the further reading section, you will find details of both Bronfenbrenner's own literature, and references you can use to access the selected critiques and further uses of the theory. Whilst the theory does have weaknesses, and the complexity that it attempts to capture can be argued as impossible to reflect, it seems an injustice that it is so often judged on misreading or simplifications of the original work and intent.

I hope you have enjoyed finding out more about this theory and about a truly brilliant film of the 1980s. If you would like to find out more about Bronfenbrenner's theory, I have suggested some recommended further reading below. If you are interested in watching some more creative genius from the best decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I have recommended some further watching, too – and how you could think about Bronfenbrenner's theory in relation to these (thus rendering their watching a part of your research and a completely valid use of time).

### Further Reading:

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hayes, N., O'Toole, E. & Halpenny, A. (2017). *Introducing Bronfenbrenner*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Moen, P., Elder, G. H. & Luscher, K. (1995). *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

### Further Watching:

**Ferris Bueller's Day Off** (1986). Directed by John Hughes for Paramount. Particularly watch out for Ferris's personal characteristics of resource and force.

**Stand By Me** (1987). Directed by Rob Reiner for Sony Pictures. A coming of age tale of friendship, adventure and racing the bad guys to find a corpse. Watch out for context (environment especially).

**The Breakfast Club** (1985). Directed by John Hughes for Universal. The ultimate detention-based film. Watch out for time in this one – how it passes in proximal processes, how it is marked, and how the characters develop and change over the course of the film.



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West, S. & Brown, T. (1975). Physical attractiveness, the severity of the emergency and helping: A field experiment and interpersonal simulation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 11 (6) , pp. 531-538.