Knowledge is Power -
Equity considerations in the Age of COVID

Topic: Trauma and Human Development: How we think about supporting each other mid-pandemic. (Understanding Bronfrenbrenner and Eco Systems)
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Presenter: Fabiola Bagula, Ph.D.

Thank you, everyone, for joining us today. I think it's a fun experiment to think about 15 minutes of research and theory. So, I want to hold that aspect because I know, if you have been working...actually, I think all of us in education have been working relentlessly. We have been sitting in Zoom meetings that last at least an hour — so it gets a little fatiguing. These sessions are just meant to provide you a nice bite-size amount of research and theory that could provoke thought and then help guide in whatever decision-making you're involved in right now, especially here in education. I almost wanted to call this session, *Things That Keep Me Up at Night* because Bronfenbrenner, who's the research theorist that we'll be looking at today, is someone that keeps me up at night. I'm concerned about our kids. One of the things that I actually saw today from the BBC...and I know I will have to share my screen very soon...there's a BBC headline that said...and I wanted to read it to you. It talked about how the impact of COVID...especially given all the disruptions for students...is going to be very long-lasting and that we won't know the real impact for a very long time. That's exactly what today is about. It's about taking a look at the potential impact that COVID is having on our children, and on our students, as they're growing up. I know... when I created this session and I created this document...and you'll see when we start...I didn't overlap the modern-day civil rights movement that we're in either. I know that's also going to play a part in, and I will play around with it because it is an extra layer of an already sort of very fragile experience that we are all in.

Ecosystems in the age of COVID. So, we're are going to use Urie Bronfenbrenner and human development theory. I want to add that, when I was a principal, I always took into consideration certain theorists that I was leaning on a lot and who kept me up at night. It was like holy cow; we're responsible for growing little human beings! I want to make sure that they're healthy and happy and civically engaged. That was ultimately what I wanted to create. Like I said earlier, there were some theorists that I was leaning on a lot and he's one of them. Just so you know, Urie Bronfenbrenner was an American psychologist, and he was a professor of emeritus at Cornell. My favorite thing about him is this is how much he loved children; he was the founder of the national head start program. He created this theory to kind think about all of the environments that children interact in or live in and the impact that it has on their growth. He has very a specific model. You'll be getting this PowerPoint because it has more information that he has to say...but we are also playing with this fifteen-minute mark. He created a

model about how all of these systems, the environmental systems, impact one another and the impact that it then has on children as they're growing up. I'm going to slow us down and talk about that. Here is what the systems look like. There's the child and then there's the microsystem, which is the immediate environment. The immediate environment to a child is probably their home, definitely their school, their peers...that kind of thing...the actual immediate environment where the child interacts. The mesosystem is the connections in those environments. Like I said, I'll go through a little bit further. The exosystem is an indirect environment, and then there's the macro... and there's your chronosystem. Let's get into this is what it looks like as a whole. What you saw right now was just a slice, so you got familiar with the names, but again, the reason why I love this theorist so much is because it's boom: the child is in the center and everything else is what impacts the child. Let's take a look at the micro systems. As I said earlier, the micro system is the most immediate environment for children. It is your daily home, your day care, your peer group. It's the interactions that involve those personal relationships with family members, teachers, and caregivers...how children interact and the experiences they have, how they are treated, or how they treat others. This actually impacts the way that they continue develop relationships further in their life. That's why it's so important for teachers to have healthy relationships with their students...to show care, to show empathy, to model all those behaviors... because this is where they learn that. That's the micro. The next system, which isn't pictured as you can see it didn't change, is the meso system. I think this system is fascinating. The meso system talks about the micro and how they interact. For example, how a child, school, and home communicate... and how they relate is really important. I'll give you a very pertinent example. I'm a little unhappy about how my son's school is showing up with this distance learning. I will never ever say that out loud or within earshot of him. That will then encourage the critical thought that I have about one of his teachers could potentially impact his relationship in a very negative way. When I was principal, I knew I would hear people say sometimes, "We're getting families that have had bad relationships as children with certain people." I could tell because they'd come in with the principal already wanting to fight. Then they experience me, and they say, "Oh wait, no you're not like the principal that I was in trouble with when I was twelve." So, people carry these sorts of messages of how we relate to each other. It's really important that how we communicate makes sense...especially now when we're all trying distance learning. How is the school communicating with family? How is it healthy? How is it proactive? How is it positive? That has an impact into the child's human development.

The exosystem, so we've talked about the micro, we've talked about the meso. Now the exosystem is that indirect environment. For example, we go to work, our children don't. If I come home with some drama from work or some complaint or some emotion, my child vicariously feels that. The example that is on this slide talks about a father who is continuously passed for a promotion and make come back and take out the anger with the household. These are the systems that children don't necessarily enter, but the parents do, or the aunties do, or someone brings it in... and so it's a vicarious sort of experience of its indirect environment. I don't necessarily have to go to my husband's job to see that he's always in conflict as an attorney because when he comes home and he's had a bad exchange, I can feel that bad exchange. I'm sure we've all lived some sort of part around that.

The next system is that macrosystem. It's the largest one, but it's the most distant. It's the value system that comes from our culture, from our values, from the dominate beliefs, from our political parties, from the economic systems. The example that is on this page talks about children in war torn areas will experience a different kind of development than children in peaceful environments. Again, it's what's we value. Right now, if we are paying attention to this, we are seeing the politician of science of

wearing the mask over not wearing the mask, of defunding police or not defunding police. It's a very heightened right now, especially in these current times. That's really what the social and cultural values part is.

The last one is the chronosystem. The chronosystem is the dimension of time. That one kind of changes. My favorite example of this is for examples we often joke when people were raised during the great depression. We know that they reuse baggies, or they reuse tin foil because they grew up taking care of things and not having abundance. I'm actually thinking... because I'm going through COVID... that I'm going to be the grandparent that's wiping everything down before it comes into the house. All of these things, the chronosystem, are the changes over time that impact our development as well.

That's an explanation really of how all of these systems interact and then participate in the development of the child. Again, this is why I love it. The child is at the center and all of this; the relationships between the environments then help create a healthy child.

The part that was keeping me awake at night... because this is a theorist that I use quite often... is that I kept thinking everything on Bronfenbrenner 's ecosystem is being impacting by COVID. I literally took it, and wrote over it, and just to validate my worry, I guess, decided to go up every single bit. Every single bit takes place in creating a healthy human being right now is being altered or disrupted. I'm concerned about that. Some families... maybe they've lost their jobs...maybe they are essential workers... their health services. Maybe we are ignoring certain health services because we don't want to expose ourselves to COVID, or maybe the actual doctors saying, "No, we aren't taking any patients." I know that my dentist had called me because I had an appointment and he said, "We aren't seeing people for cleaning yet." Little things like that are happening. The schools are closed. My child is playing Minecraft online, but he's not seeing his peers. The neighborhood playground is closed. The exosystem people are six feet away. That's really concerning me. It's taking a look at how every single part of what creates a healthy human being right now is being altered. Like I said, we can take the civic unrest, the civil rights movement that's happening and even overlapping that on this. Especially, because I live in La Mesa. La Mesa had some very specific outcomes after the first protest, and that causes, again, some macrosystem, some exosystem and some chronosystem fears where my son fell asleep to the sounds of helicopters and sirens all night. What about this right? I'm worried, all of this is coming. The real thing to do is how do we intentionally intervene and what are some considerations. I started brainstorming what can I do as a parent. What can I do as an educator to think about how might I intervene in some of these things? The first part, and I think the most important part, is ensuring healthy and continuous communication between home and school. That part, like I said, I'm critical about how the school's playing out, but I'm making sure he's responsible and making sure he's keeping up with his assignments...and that he's talking to his teachers...and he has those positive outcomes...because it is so important. After participating in the forums and the surveys, I was critical about the survey, but I kept that to myself. You are the only ones that know because it is really important for him to see that there's a healthy sort of communication between the two. I'm working on designing spaces for play and for peer interactions, so it's not always Minecraft. What else might we do together so that there's still play and there's still peers? His cousins are still talking to each other. We have nightly calls with our family, so that there's still that connection. My cousin who is very religious and talks about dressing every Sunday and still reading passages. That was a habit that they did every Sunday. We would get dressed up, go to church, go to brunch. She said, "So now we still wake up; we still dress up; we read some passages; and we have a nice breakfast together." This is adding some sort of normalcy, but also continuing to honor

those practices that you have. Some other considerations are to offer a narrative of care and compassion rather than fear. The news is really scary right now. They like to cause hysteria and divide. I know that I seek out positive stories. There's a YouTube channel that only focuses on the good, so we watch that. That's our news. There's good news too, so we are going to take care of that. Be mindful of the conversations that we're having in front of children. They're listening; they're paying attention. They worry without telling us, and their worry emerges in different kinds of behavior. Lastly, of course create opportunities for the healthy and curious dialogue. What are you thinking about? How are you feeling about all of this? What would you like to know? I am going to say that that last question: we don't often ask enough. Children are very curious beings and we need to honor what it is they would like to know more of. Sometimes it gets a little difficult. I know. I've definitely received some responses to where I have to negotiate between my own perspective of what's appropriate and then thinking about a thirteen-year-old developing mind. This was really the bulk of the fifteen minutes. It was ready to think about this large exosystem and how they relate to each other and how they impact...but also paying attention to our responsibly of where we are as an adult within these systems and how we can healthily intervene for the sake of our students.