

What Motivates People to Learn?

**Psychological Responses from
Ecological-Developmental and
Humanistic Standpoints**

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About the Presenter

- Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society; General Member of BPS Divisions of Child & Educational Psychology, and Teaching & Learning in Psychology.
- Lecturer (full-time, permanent) in the Psychology of Education at the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin.
- Graduate of the University of Glasgow (B.Sc. (Hons.) (1995)) and Trinity College Dublin (M.Sc. (Couns. Psychol.) (1997), Ph.D. (2007)).
- Member of Trinity College Dublin's Anti-Bullying Centre's staff since 2000; joint co-ordinator of the ABC since August 2010.
- Member of School of Education's International Research for an Inclusive Society research grouping.
- Co-author (with Professor Mona O' Moore) of *Dealing with Bullying in Schools: A Training Manual for Teachers, Parents and Other Professionals*, and has authored and co-authored numerous scholarly articles on the subjects on psychology in education, school bullying, cyber-bullying and school violence.
- Regularly called upon to provide training and presentations to various groups within schools and the broader community.

Topics of Discussion

- 1 – What do we Mean by Learning and Motivation?
- 2 – Understanding Influences on Development
- 3 – Understanding Barriers to Learning
- 4 – Rehumanising Motivation and Learning
- 5 – A Closing Thought



1 – What do we Mean by Learning and Motivation?

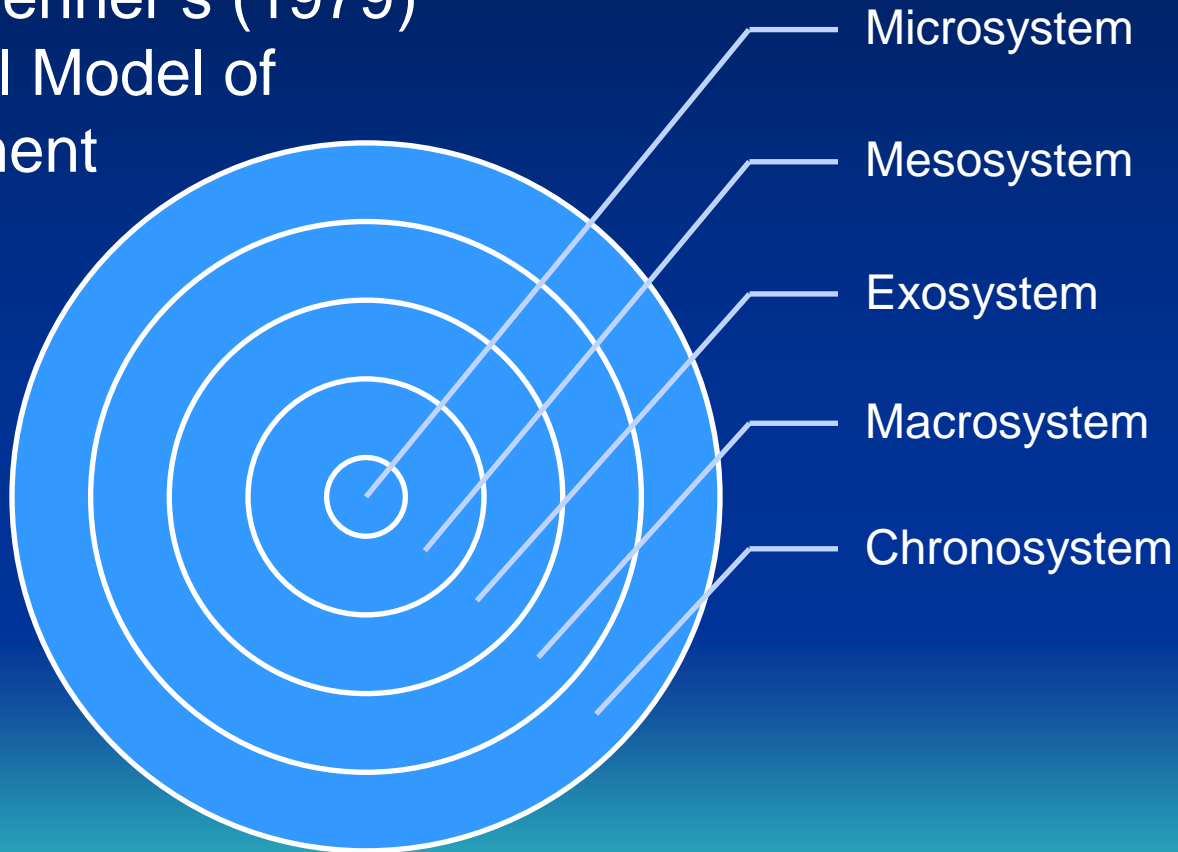
- *Learning* – ‘the process of acquiring knowledge or the actual possession of such; scholarship.’
- *Motivation* – ‘an intervening process or an internal state of an organism that drives it into action.’
- (*Source: Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*).

2A – Understanding Influences on Development (I)

- Despite evidence that the child is an active participant in their development, the classical psychological theories of childhood development rarely pay heed to the ecological context of the child's development (i.e., Piaget, Freud).
- Even Erik Erikson's focus on 'nature' was limited to immediate influences such as parents and peers.
- Bronfenbrenner (1977) asserted that "... it can be said that much of contemporary developmental psychology is *the science of the strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time.*" (p. 317).
- Bronfenbrenner (1979) offers a conceptualisation of the child's ecology as a multi-layered set of nested and interconnected environmental systems, all of whose 'agents' influence the development of the child, with varying degrees of directness (see slide 3B).

2B – Understanding Influences on Development (II)

Bronfenbrenner's (1979)
Ecological Model of
Development



2C – Understanding Influences on Development (III)

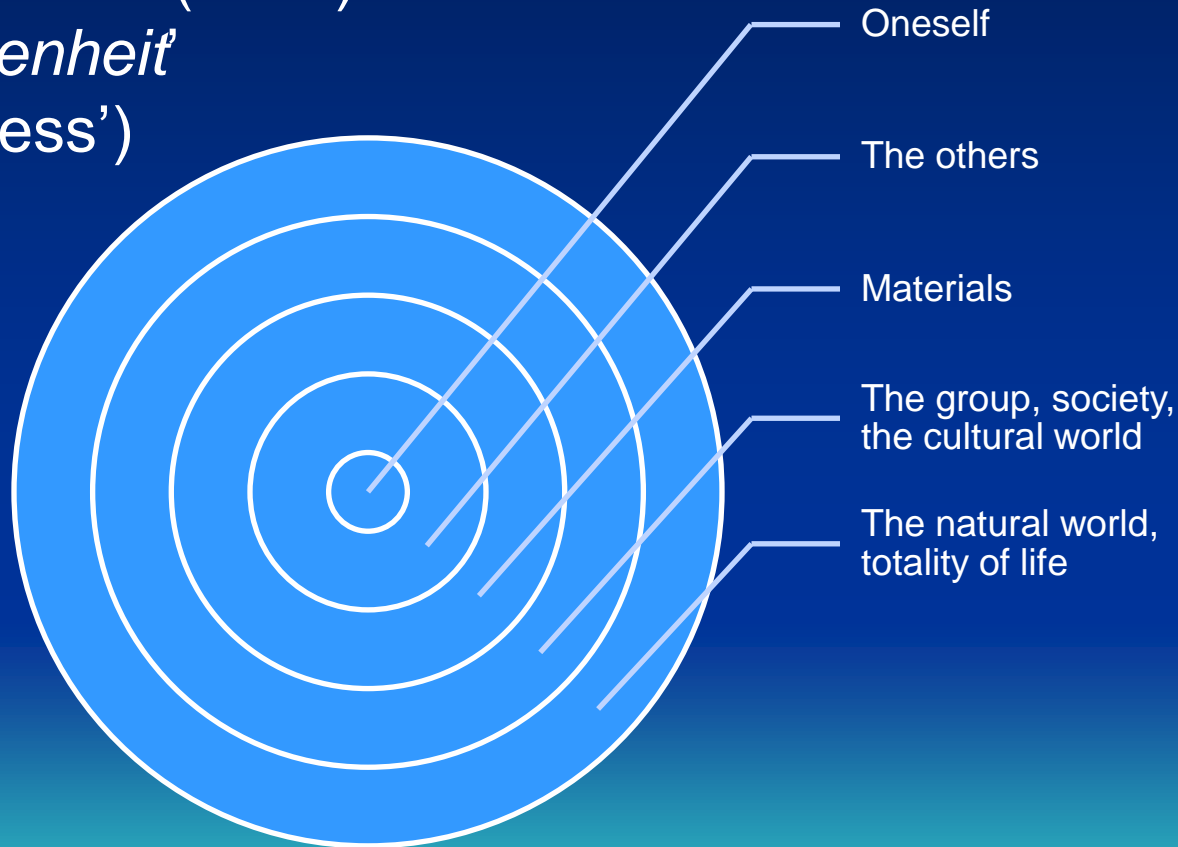
- **Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Model of Development**
- *Micro-system* - those who are emotionally and practically closest to the individual (i.e., parents, guardians, family). Much of the contact at this level is face-to-face, but often limited to dyadic relations. Increases in the size of the micro-system should lead to enhancements in the child's development.
- *Meso-system* - characterised by the relations between multiple micro-systems – schools, peers, neighbourhood.
- *Exo-system* - systems in a social setting in which the child is not actually involved, but which nonetheless exert an indirect influence upon their life (e.g., parents' place of work, governmental agencies).
- *Macro-level* - influences at a removed level, such as regional, international, or global changes.
- *Chrono-system* (added to model in 1989) - the 'temporal component' in which the ecosystem is immersed. On-going reciprocal periods of development between the individual and the environment across the lifespan (e.g., effects of divorce, changes in family structure over the lifespan, changes in socioeconomic status, etc).

3A – Understanding Barriers to Learning (I)

- ‘*Verbondenheid*’ (‘*Linkedness*’)
- Since the late 1990s – simultaneously a conceptual position, and a practical method of working with whole-school communities on the issues of non-respectful behaviour and school violence.
- Emerged in Flanders (Department of Criminology, Catholic University of Leuven (Deklerck, Deboutte, & Depuydt, 2003) and their colleagues (Deboutte, Deklerck, O’ Moore & Minton, 2006)).
- The conceptual position holds that so-called ‘delinquency’ and non-respectful behaviour at school are *non-accidental*, and ‘in broad terms, involve the interaction between person-related factors (both endogenous and exogenous) on the one hand, and context-related factors on the other’ (Deboutte et al., 2006, p. 10).
- A consequent ecological approach (drawing heavily from Bronfenbrenner) to such problems takes into account five levels – the personal, the interaction, the material, the broad social environment and the ‘natural living’ environment levels (Deboutte et al., 2006) (see slide 3B).

3B – Understanding Barriers to Learning (II)

Deboutte et al. (2006) –
‘Verbondenheit’
(‘Linkedness’)



3C – Understanding Barriers to Learning (III)

- ‘*Verbondenheid*’ (‘Linkedness’) (cont’d).
- ‘*De-link-ency*’ is in general ‘....always the expression of the lack of a *link* between the offender and (one or more dimensions of) the victimised environment’ (Deklerck et al., 2003, p. 321; italics mine) and ‘....consequently, re-linking is the logical answer’ (Deboutte et al., 2006, p. 11).
- The ‘Linkedness’ concept has been applied in the generation of resources, administered and available through the *Centrum voor Ervarings Gericht Onderwijs* [Centre for Experiential Education] in Leuven, Belgium (CEGO, 2010), that have been used in whole-school programmes in Flanders and beyond. Most CEGO resources are available in Dutch, English and French (CEGO, 2010).
- Deboutte et al.’s (2006) account, which includes key ‘Linkedness’ resources, is available in Bulgarian, Dutch, English, German, and Spanish, directly on the world-wide web: <http://www.vista-europe.org/downloads/English/B3f.pdf>

3D – Understanding Barriers to Learning (IV)

- **‘*Verbondenheid*’** (‘Linkedness’) (cont’d).
- In such programmes, the goals of applying the ‘Linkedness’ concept have been the creation of a positive school ethos and environment, and the reduction of non-respectful and violent behaviour in schools, through co-operative endeavours involving the entire school team (Deklerck et al., 2006).
- According to Deklerck et al. (2003), ‘Linkedness’ is ‘very closely entwined’ with the CEGO. This pedagogy is characterised as:
- *‘....start[ing] from the experiential world of the child....children want to learn, and a school must offer the right stimulation....children are able to ethically flourish if given the chance to reflect upon deeply human experiences that present themselves in everyday life.’*
- This is very close to a classical humanistic position on motivation and learning (see slides 4A and 4B).

4A – Rehumanising Motivation and Learning (I)

- **Abraham H. Maslow on Motivation (1954)**
- Prior explanations of human motivation – ‘escape from deficit needs’
 - Psychoanalysis – unconscious drives, id demands
 - Behaviourism – patterns of reinforcement
- Humanistic approach – drive towards self-actualisation
 - What is self-actualisation?
 - Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
 - Self-actualisation and peak experiences
 - D-Love and B-Love

4B – Rehumanising Motivation and Learning (II)

- **Carl R. Rogers on Psychotherapy (1951) and Education (1974, 1994)**
- Client-Centred Therapy
 - Need to view the whole person (unlike, say, psychoanalysis)
 - ‘Basic human striving’ as a motivational force
- Therapeutic Conditions for Change
 - Empathy
 - Unconditional Positive Regard
 - Genuineness
- Educational Conditions for Change
 - Empathic Concern
 - Valuing
 - Genuineness
- **In order to understand how one can motivate another to learn, first question how you view motivation yourself.**

5 – A Closing Thought

Dear Teacher,

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what

No man should witness:

Gas chambers built by learned engineers.

Children poisoned by educated physicians.

Infants killed by trained nurses.

Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates.

So, I am suspicious of education.

My request is: Help your students become human.

*Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated
Eichmans.*

Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve

To make our children more human.

(Pring, R. (2004) *Philosophy of Education: Aims, Theory, Common Sense and Research*,
London: Continuum, p. 24).

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**THANKS FOR
LISTENING!**

ANY QUESTIONS?



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