

FSGN 1101.18 Introduction to Gerontology

Critical Ecological Model

Resource for Assignment #2: Research Paper

As discussed in Module #2, the Critical Ecological Model is a blending of Critical Theory and the Ecological Model. The following document reviews the discussion in week 2 in further detail.

Critical Theory	Ecological Model
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emerged to address limitations• Questions findings, structure and inquiry method of theoretical-based research• Concerned with social inequalities and social justice. Action and thought are fundamentally mediated by power relations and systemic oppression. <p>(Novak, Northcott & Campbell, 2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Person-environment relationship (comprised of individual and their context)• To understand human development, one must consider the entire ecological system where growth occurs.• Environment can be broken down into levels: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems and macrosystem

To gain a further understanding of how the environment is broken down in the Ecological Model, the following definitions are from Bronfenbrenner's 1977 paper, "Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development."

Microsystem: the regular face-to-face interactions between a person and their environment, a specific setting for that person (home, work, recreation). A setting is a place with specific physical feature where participants engage in activity in specific roles for a set amount of time (parent, employee, participant).

Mesosystem: is the interactions between major settings containing the person at a certain point in their life. For an older adult this may include interactions among family, workplace, social circle or recreation. In other words, it is system of microsystems.

Exosystem: is an extension of the mesosystem that includes other social structures (formal and informal), that may not contain the person directly but affect or include their settings, thereby influencing their immediate environment. Examples of these structures include neighbourhood, media, government agencies, transportation and informal social networks.

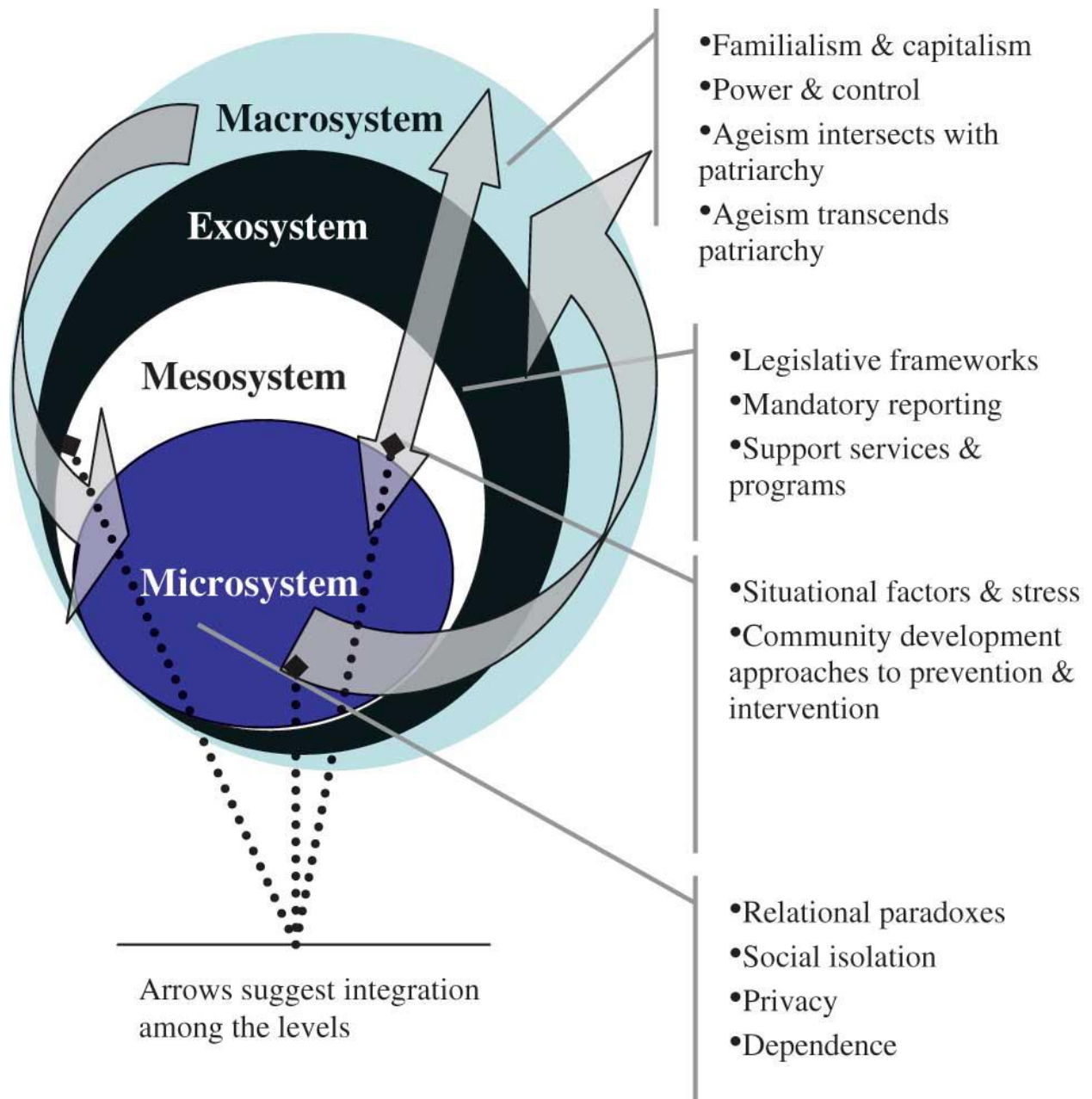
Macrosystem: institutional patterns of the culture (economic, social, education, legal, political systems) that are within the micro-, meso- and exosystems. Macrosystems are built and studied not only as structures but as a way to deliver information and ideology (implicitly and explicitly) giving meaning to social networks, role, activities and how they inter-relate. (p. 514-515).

Norris, Fancey, Powers, & Ross (2013) provide a succinct summation of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) four environmental levels stating that the "ecological perspective suggests that family interactions encompass transactions that occur between four levels of environment—family, family's social network, social support networks within the community, and society and dominant ideologies." (p.47)

The **Critical Ecological Model** integrates key assumptions and propositions from critical theory into ecological conceptions. A key assumption in Critical Theory is the mediation of power relationships, which are evident throughout the ecological environments. This model enables us to see how macrosystem ideologies are visible in everyday lives (Norris, et al., 2013).

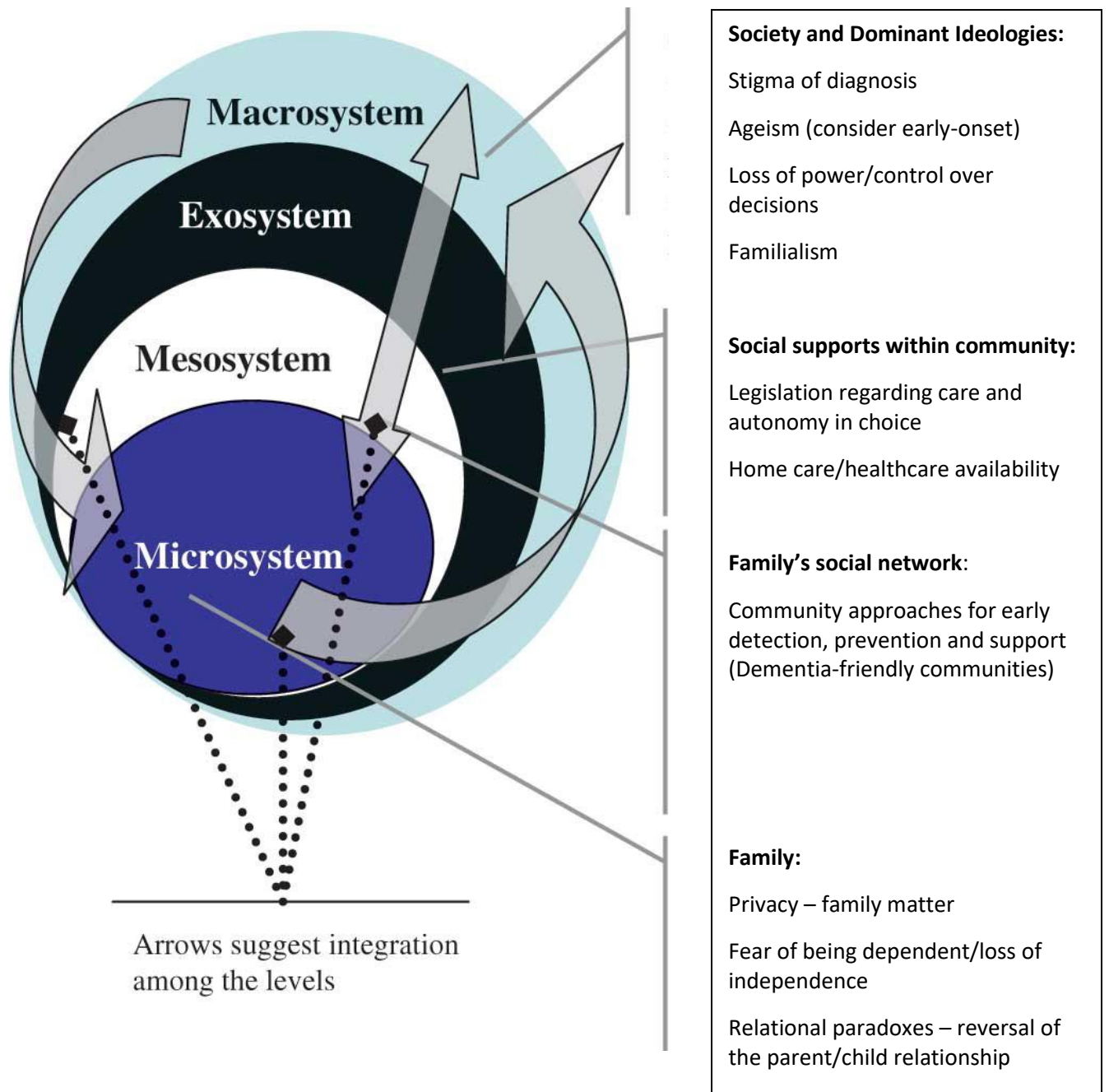
I encourage you to read Norris, et al. (2013). "The Critical-Ecological Framework: Advancing Knowledge, Practice and Policy on Older Adult Abuse", for the best understanding of how the model is used. I have provided the article's model (Figure 1, p.48) below. Following that is the example discussed at the end of class in week 2.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.



(Figure 1: Norris, et al., 2013)

Using the Critical Ecological Model to understand the under-diagnosis of dementia.



(Figure 1: Norris, et al., 2013)

References

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32, 513-531.

Norris, D., Fancey, P., Powers, E., & Ross, P. (2013). The critical-ecological framework: Advancing knowledge, practice and policy on older adult abuse. *Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect*, 25, 40-55. DOI: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.msvu.ca/10.1080/08946566.2012.712852>

Novak, M., Northcott, H. C., & Campbell, L. (2016). *Aging and Society: Canadian Perspectives* (8th ed.). Toronto: Nelson.