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Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory and the Experience of Institutionalization of Romanian Children¹

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“ . . . it is essential to determine which policies and programs can do most to enable families to perform the magic feat of which they alone are capable: making and keeping human beings human.”

(Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 738)

Introduction to Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), often referred to as the bioecological model, delineates the lifelong progressive accommodations that individuals make regarding the changing environments they encounter. Through his work, Bronfenbrenner sought to extend the restricted scope of developmental research that was conducted by psychologists during the 1970's. Bronfenbrenner's theory is focused on the quality and context of individuals' life as viewed through developmental phases that occur within the context of complex interconnected systems. In addition, he noted that individuals' environments and ecological realities influence their development, including behavior. He found that positive, healthy, and safe social environments are important for optimal developmental outcomes. He held that individuals are directly influenced by systems, such as family, school, and workplace; and indirectly by policies, resources, and expectations of others. He introduced the idea of how dynamic environments are important influences on developing individuals, and that in turn, individuals are capable of influencing their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Personal characteristics, such as intelligence, temperament, physical appearance, and activities in which the person engages, such as social interactions, physical activities, and maintenance tasks, can influence the environment and its impact.

Bronfenbrenner included this “bioecological paradigm” in his model, thus accounting for the process-person-context-time phenomena. Bronfenbrenner identifies these four dimensions (i.e., process, persons, context, and time) as key components in the developmental process (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). With these factors in mind, he developed two core propositions for understanding human development through his ecological theory.

His first proposition is that developing individuals move through “processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interactions” with other active, evolving “biopsychological” individuals, as well as objects and symbols in the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, p. 650). The author defined processes as “particular forms of interaction between organisms and environment, called proximal processes, that operate over time and are the primary mechanism producing human development” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 995). Proximal processes take place between parents and children, but also within learning and recreational activities, thus further developing the individuals and their environments in relationships with others such as teachers, sport teammates or neighbors.

His second proposition is that the influence of proximal processes varies significantly based on changes taking place in developing persons, their biopsychological characteristics, the immediate and distant environments in which

they participate, and developmental factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Consequently, Bronfenbrenner (1977) described human development as “the progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the lifespan, between a growing human organism and the changing immediate environment in which it lives” (p. 514). Bronfenbrenner suggested that for proximal processes to be effective, they must occur regularly and over extended periods of time.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) conceptualized his theory in terms of nested systems ranging from micro to macro: *microsystems*, *mesosystems*, *exosystems*, and *macrosystems*. He posited that human development was determined by these four levels of systems. He also emphasized the multidimensional environmental sources that influence individuals as well as the influence that individuals have on the environment. Later, he added the *chronosystem* to his theory, which includes the concept of individuals as constantly changing over their lifespan and how the time period in which they live influences their approach to their environment. The concept of the chronosystem adds the influence of chronological age to expectations and assumptions of development. For example, parental discipline towards children’s misconduct could vary based on age and cultural norms with the expectation that behavior would improve over time. Additionally, Bronfenbrenner recognized that genetics are an important element of the ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

The core system in Bronfenbrenner’s model (1977) is the *microsystem* defined as “the complex of relationship between the developing person and the environment in the immediate setting containing the person” (p. 514). The microsystem is described as bidirectional, such that both the individual and his immediate environment develop together. The microsystem is the most intimate, intense, durable, influential, and innermost level of the different systems that make up the environment. Much of an individual’s behavior is learned in the microsystem. An individual is the product of her microsystem. The microsystem includes family, peer group, classroom, and sometimes church, temple, or mosque as well. The influences of the microsystem extend to all aspects of development, language, nutrition, security, health, and beliefs. Of all the microsystems, family is the most influential for emotional development, and as an individual matures the range of emotion grows to include the influences of his expanding environment. As previously stated, the relationships between the ecological systems and the individual are dynamic and influence one another, therefore it is important to note that these systems are not static.

The *mesosystem* comprises “the relationship among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point of his or her life” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 514). The mesosystem refers to a system of microsystems, or to the interactions between the microsystems. Each mesosystem, through which an individual experiences new activities and social structures, influences development. Mesosystems can also be dyadic systems that include interpersonal relationships. A mesosystem could manifest itself as the interpersonal bonding between the developing individual and the members of a specific microsystem. The interconnections between settings and people are not limited to those made by the developing individual, but also include those made between other

people in her microsystems. Such interconnections could vary from connections between a child's home and school, to his parents and teachers trying to coordinate their efforts to educate the child.

The *exosystem* surrounds the microsystems. These systems include all external networks, such as community and educational structures that influence the microsystems. Even though a developing individual has no direct interaction with the exosystem, it nevertheless affects her experiences. These experiences are impacted because the exosystem influences the settings of the systems in which the individual participates directly. Consider this in the context of school funding, as more or less money is awarded from the government to an individual's classroom the means in which the teacher presents the curriculum would be altered. This change in money allocation then has an impact on the dynamic of the person and teacher. Whether formal or informal, exosystems are an extension of the mesosystems and influence their social structures. These structures provide a foundation for the relationships of the developing person such as values, resources, and context to their relationships in the communities. Health agencies, religious institutions, mass media, communities, and schools are examples of exosystems in the life of the developing individual.

Influencing all other systems are the *macrosystems*. The macrosystems are the larger cultural contexts in which developing individuals live (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). They can be viewed as the "blueprints" of society and are the general norms that influence the cultural or subcultural stability that give structure to the life of developing persons. The majority of macrosystems are informal and subconsciously settled ideologies, which individuals carry and manifest every day through customs and traditions. Macrosystems consist of the values, laws, customs, and other resources of a particular culture or subculture. Some examples of macrosystems are society, economics, political systems, culture, and national identity. Macrosystems influence the form and nature of the micro-, meso-, and exo-systems. Macrosystems also provide a great example of the influence of the chronosystem, which is better defined below.

The chronosystem introduced the aspects of time and its effect on developmental processes. Bronfenbrenner (1977) highlighted the significance of time to various environmental systems. He noted that the influence of proximal processes on an individual's development and her environment changes as an individual ages. He evaluated chronosystems through the lens of life altering events described as normative or non-normative. Normative transitions occurred within the culturally or subculturally settled range of expected events through time in the developing person's life, such as entering school, going off to college, dating, getting married or reproducing. Non-normative transitions involved culturally or subculturally unexpected disruptions affecting the developmental progress of the individual through time, such as the sudden death of a love one, divorce, moving, major changes in income or unexpected pregnancy.

Bronfenbrenner (1986) also recognized the importance of genetic factors and their contribution to an accurate understanding of individual's development in various contexts. He explored a bioecological model in which internal factors such as emotional systems and the biology of the individual influence the developmental

process. He proposed that each individual's characteristics, either biological or physical, have an impact on his development.

An individual's development cannot be fully understood without paying attention to the influence of interaction between microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems. Our intention is to extend this concept to the Romanian children with histories of institutionalization.

Bronfenbrenner's Nested Systems Applied to Romanian Institutionalized Children

Microsystems

The core system of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1977) is the microsystem which is defined as the series of complex relationships between a developing individual and her immediate environment or setting. A microsystem in the developing person's life is the most intimate, durable, intense, influential, and innermost level of the environment. The microsystem affects all aspects of development in the individual. The microsystem includes family, peer groups, classroom, and religious groups. A person is the product of his microsystems. Halsall, Manion, and Henderson's (2018) research on integrated youth services indicated the range of models used to provide multiple services with the objective of providing a more comprehensive response to client needs. The integrated youth services models align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory through purposeful designs that represent the extensiveness of the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-systems in the life of the developing child. At the microsystem level, integrated youth services incorporate systems that directly influence youth development, focusing on primary care, school programs, community support groups, and significant participation in family activities. Taking Bronfenbrenner's theory, these services focus on family engagement as the core component for creating a family experience and support. Leu (2008) examined early music education in Taiwan through Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. He explained that factors like adult perception of children, child-adult interactions, family structure, and their existing educational system were all part of their microsystem.

Romanian institutionalized children's microsystems include the places or settings where they lived along with the roles of people involved in each setting (e.g., child, peer, caregiver), and activities of the members within the setting (e.g., feeding, nurturing, playing). There are multiple important proximal processes in the life of a child and in different stages of his development. Examples of these proximal processes are feeding or comforting a baby, playing with a young child, child-child activities, group or solitary play, reading, learning new skills, athletic activities, problem solving, caring for others in distress, making plans, performing complex tasks, acquiring new knowledge, and know-how (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 996). The microsystems, as well as the developmental proximal processes, were abnormally deficient for Romanian institutionalized children; as a consequence, children were severely deprived which affected their development.

Regarding children's privation in institutionalized settings, Gunnar (2001)

described a hierarchy of needs, including levels of privation that show when and how these needs are met or not in institutional settings. Accordingly, the author noted four basic needs that children have: (1) health and nutrition; (2) physical and mental stimulation that support sensorimotor, cognitive, and language development; (3) adult-child and child-child social stimulation; and (4) stable and consistent relationships. Several studies have found three levels of privation within institutionalized settings: (1) global privation occurred when the entire range of needs were not met in the institutions (Rutter, 1998); (2) some institutions provided acceptable health and nutrition, but failed to provide stimulation and relationships; and (3) others met all needs with the exception of creating long-term relationships with consistent caregivers (Gunnar, 2001).

There is very little literature on institutionalized children in Romania that dates prior to 1989. Therefore, much is unknown about the levels of privation before that year. Taking into account the results of some studies in the early 1990's on Romanian institutionalized children adopted in United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, we can conclude that the levels of privation prior to 1989 were either the same or worse than those found in institutions in the early 1990's. The retrospective studies provided evidence that relationships within the microsystems of Romanian institutionalized children had some unpleasant characteristics.

In a study conducted by Onica-Chipea, Stanciu, and Chipea (2008), the authors interviewed 90 post-institutionalized adults, of which 59.5% had a good or very good opinion about the child protection and development in these institutions and approximately 27% had a bad or a very bad opinion. Additionally, 68.9% of these adults expressed that while living in institutions they had no one who they could identify as a close attachment figure. Moreover, 54% knew of incidents in institutions where children either practiced or were pressured to have sexual relationships between same sex partners and 72% were physically abused. The participants interviewed in this study were at least 20 years of age, lived in orphanages or residential institutions in Bihor County, Romania, and all of them lived in institutions for at least 4 years during the communist regime.

Lie and Murărașu (2001) examined a sample of Romanian institutionalized children retrospectively between 1995 and 1998. In their sample, they included 55 boys born in 1976 and 20 girls born in 1977. In their study, they found that 5.2% of the boys and 6% of the girls had been exposed to severe physical abuse. The authors also noted that 57% of the boys and 35% of the girls had suffered at least some type of physical abuse while in the orphanage. This abuse was usually committed by older children from the same institution for their own entertainment or for punishments. Moreover, children were also physically abused by their supervisors, teachers, caregivers, and/or law enforcement personnel. The authors noted that 7% of the boys and 12% of the girls were severely or frequently sexually abused in the orphanage setting, while 16% of the boys and 24% of the girls experienced some sexual abuse during their time at the orphanage.

Although there was variation among residential institutions, most can be characterized by certain features. For instance, Romanian residential institutions had low ratios of caregivers to children, usually one caregiver for every 20 to 50 children; there were large numbers of children placed within each institution, 400

to 500 children (NACPA & UNICEF, 2004). Also, a minimal communication between caregivers and children, lack of psychological investment from caregivers, and lack of toys or educational activities available for children were cited (Rutter et al., 2007). Other issues included little to no interactions between the children and their peers, lack of basic needs training (toilet training), strict meal times, limited availability of food, clothing, and shelter (Johnson et al., 1993); lack of personalized and individualized developmental programming available for children (CHCCSG, 1992); and lack of management structures by medical personnel (Castle et al., 1999).

Canadian parents who adopted children from Romanian institutions during 1990 and 1991 reported that their children lived in an environment in which they had little to no visual and auditory stimulation; they had to share a colorless, sterile, and very quiet room with 20 to 30 other silent children. Children reported a lack of encouragement or praise while institutionalized. Additionally, they reported that they did not have enough to eat or drink, and they were often fed some kind of thickish and clear tea (McMullan & Fisher, 1992). According to Ames and Carter (1992), many infants and toddlers lived in overcrowded conditions and regularly spent 20 hours per day rocking back and forth or shifting from foot to foot in their cribs. Due to poor conditions in some institutions, children were assigned a crib which they shared with another child, and children from 1.5 to 2 years of age received their food from a self-held bottle. Also, children followed strict schedules when washing, feeding, and using the toilet; if not, they would be left dirty and hungry. Castle et al. (1999) reported that almost 50% of the children had diets that could be rated as “very poor” and only 17% of the children received “adequate nourishing but monotonous” diet. Out of 75 children who left Romania before the age of 18 months and were institutionalized, 70 (92%) children gave a “very poor” rating for range of physical experience, and 66 (87%) children gave a “very poor” rating for access to toys while institutionalized. Based on these descriptions of the children’s microsystem and immediate environment, we may conclude that the most important needs were health and nutrition; stimulation supporting sensorimotor, cognitive and language development; child-child and adult-child stimulation, as well as consistent and stable relationships. These needs of the children’s immediate environment or microsystem were not adequately met during the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, making it possible that many institutionalized children during this period experienced severe global privation.

During the early 1990’s, international governmental, non-governmental organizations, and the Romanian authorities offered aid to improve the living conditions in institutions. However, despite these improvements, the environment within institutions was still deprived and abusive. Subsequently, Stativa (2000) found that under 13% of institutionalized children slept in rooms with up to 4 children, more than 50% slept in rooms with 5 to 8 children, and 36.9% slept in rooms with over 8 children. In addition, only 66.9% of the toilets and 25.2% of the showers had doors and/or screens. The absence of doors or screens for toilets and showers was a deliberate action of the management to discourage homosexual practices and masturbation. Regarding meals, although most of the institutions had menus which were labeled satisfactory for school-aged children, the authors revealed that dairy and milk, along with fruits, were not regular items in the

children's meals. Moreover, in the same study, Stativa (2000) observed that almost half (48.1%) of the children aged 7 to 18 confirmed being beaten by personnel of the institution as a common punishment. Children in this study confirmed that most punishments were given by educational personnel (76%), night attendants (8.7%), administrative personnel (2.7%), directors (2.2%), and others (0.9%). Furthermore, more than a third (36.1%) of the institutionalized children were aware of incidents in which children were forced to have sexual relationships; half of the institutionalized children aged 7 to 18 claimed to have been victims of homosexual abuse by a child in the same institution, and 11.8% were victims of heterosexual abuse. Additionally, the authors found that older children in institutions exploited their younger peers, forcing them to do odd jobs such as washing, ironing, or other housework.

During the 1990's, Romanian institutions for abandoned children started to provide acceptable health and nutrition of the children. Despite this, the institutions still failed to provide an adequate amount of stimulation to support sensorimotor, cognitive, and language development; adult-child and child-child social stimulation; or consistent and stable relationships. As a consequence, many of these children continued to experience high levels of privation. The Bucharest Early Intervention Project (BEIP, Zeanah et al., 2003) revealed common features of the caregivers in institutionalized settings. These caregivers were faced with restricted daily schedules, a high ratio of children to caregivers, and a management structure led by medical personnel. In 2001, Gavrilovici and Groza (2007) analyzed the extent of violence exposure on 448 children and adolescents of 8 to 17 years of age living in 6 residential institutions in Iasi County, Romania. Children's reports revealed that 68.8% of males and 63.9% of females had been threatened in the year prior to the study, 73% of males and 68.2% of females stated that they were slapped/hit/punched, and 12.1% of males and 6% of females recounted being attacked/stabbed with a knife. Additionally, 31.2% of boys and 27% of girls reported being sexually abused.

Despite improvements made in the areas of care, nutrition, and stimulation, institutions failed to curb the violence and provide consistent and stable relationships for the children. Thus, while global privation was no longer common, the lack of safe environments in the institutions and children's continued lack of stable relationships impeded optimal development.

Mesosystem

The mesosystem is the series of relationships among the major settings containing the developing person at a particular point of her life (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The mesosystem is a system of microsystems, or the interactions between microsystems. Each mesosystem involves different activities and different emotions experienced by the developing person, thus, each mesosystem has developmental consequences for the individual. The mesosystems are not limited to those systems that contain the developing person, but also include interactions between other people in his microsystems. In the Halsall et al. (2018) study regarding integrated youth services, the authors looked at care coordination at the mesosystem level.

Integrated youth services prioritized the sharing of information, collaboration, service integration, and explicit involvement of the microsystems in order to maximize the care coordination in the lives of the youths. In Lea's study (2008) regarding the mesosystem for early childhood music education, the quality of the parent-child-teacher relationship was one of the most impactful factors in the life of a developing child. These concepts of integrated services and coordinated efforts from multiple microsystems are pivotal in optimizing the development of an individual. In applying this theory to Romanian institutionalized children, it is recognized that multiple intricate forces drive behavior. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner noted the significance of understanding the individual within the context of all levels of the ecological systems.

Romanian institutionalized children had a very narrow mesosystem that encompassed few interrelations among their microsystems. Many experiences within the residential institution's microsystem, where relationships with caregivers or child-peers were filled with violence, also influenced children's experiences within the school microsystem. Additionally, the school environment was not safe for these children. Gavrilovici (2004) noted that 41.9% of males and 43.8% of females declared that they were exposed to threats at school in the year before their study. In addition, 46.7% of males and 42.9% of females stated that they were slapped/hit/pushed at school. Another microsystem was the neighborhood where children resided. According to the authors, the neighborhoods were also dangerous to the children. Moreover, 46.5% of males and 36.1% of females noted that they had experienced threats in their neighborhood, and 34.1% of males and 18% of females declared that they were slapped/hit/pushed in the neighborhood. Therefore, the authors stated that neither schools nor neighborhoods were safe environments for children in Romanian institutions. Correspondingly, the interrelationships between microsystems, specifically school, neighborhood, and residential institutions, may have adversely impacted children's psychological development.

Exosystem

The exosystem surrounds the microsystems. The exosystem includes all the external networks of the developing person. These can include the community, educational structures, and even living arrangements. These systems do not have a direct interaction with the developing person, but they do have a significant impact on their experiences. The exosystem provides values, resources and context to the beliefs, traditions, and culture of the developing person. At the same time, exosystems provide a foundation and support for the relationships within them. The exosystems of integrated youth services models require collaboration between the agencies and the policies that support such agencies. Substantial investment of resources and time are necessary for functional delivery of support to the youths (Halsall et al., 2018). For example, the exosystem for early childhood music education illustrated that early childhood teacher training in music influenced the children's musical growth (Lea, 2008).

An institutionalized child's exosystem is the set of microsystems that may

impact her development, whether the child participates directly, or participation is external to her experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The exosystem can be illustrated as the national strategies and policies for institutionalized children, which are applied by national and local governmental agencies. For the last couple of decades, national policies regarding the placement of abandoned children have changed considerably. During the communist regime in Romania, the protection and responsibility for children was undertaken by the state. Thus, many policies were created to encourage families in difficult circumstances to relinquish their children to residential institutions, which was considered the solution to all problems (NAPCR, 2006; Zamfir & Zamfir, 1996). After the communist regime ended, many policies regarding institutionalized children changed. Specifically, during 1990 and 1991 many quick fix solutions were implemented (Greenwell, 2003). These solutions included providing large amounts of aid for children (Dickens & Groza, 2004) and encouraging adoption (UNICEF, 1997). Between the years 1992 and 1996, the policies created in 1990 and 1991 were minimal. From 1997 to 2000, real reforms that significantly improved institutionalized children's welfare were created (Greenwell, 2003). Later, between 2001-2004, new policies were created to provide alternatives to institutionalization and many large institutions were closed (NAPCR & UNICEF, 2004). The new policies focused on preventing the separation of children from their families (NAPCR, 2010). Also, from 2005-present, legislative packages have been implemented to transform the system from one focused on the protection of children in difficulty to a system that protects them while also respecting their rights. Thus, there has been a dramatic change in the exosystem of Romanian institutionalized children in recent years, which has directly impacted their quality of life.

Though it may be beneficial to change policy in order to better serve children, could the changes interact with other exo, meso, and micro systems? The encompassing benefits of these changes in Romania legislature eclipses the possible drawbacks, especially considering all the reported data on abuse, deprivation of the four basic developmental needs, and safety concerns.

Macrosystem

The macrosystems are the larger cultural contexts that influence all other systems giving structure and direction to the life of a developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Macrosystems are known as the "blueprints" that keep society running. At the macrosystem level, Halsall et al. (2018) explained that developmental settings for youth are influenced by cultural norms. The modern stigma of mental health and "cultural shame" that comes with seeking help have been significant roadblocks for youths seeking help. Fortunately, thanks to technology, macrosystems and their advances are making it easier for consumers to access mental health services and maintain anonymity. As an example of macrosystems' influence, Leu (2008) expressed that educational policies and practices in the early childhood musical education macrosystem affected children's musical learning. This is also exemplified in the Head Start program Bronfenbrenner helped create, which allows underprivileged children and their families access to

resources that aid in psychological, financial, educational, and social aspects of life. Therefore, it is possible that these systems interact in a way that develops, not only the individual, but each other as well in a sort of feedback loop. More research in this area is needed.

As aforementioned, the macrosystem does not affect institutionalized children directly, rather it includes a large variety of indirect influences that affect their lives such as laws, customs, resources, and cultural values. Specifically, for Romanian institutionalized children, the macrosystem included governmental economic, social, and educational policies, as well as Romanian values, customs, beliefs, and knowledge regarding children's education and development. Prior to 1989, Romania had one of the most oppressive communist regimes, characterized by a single party which controlled all the levels of power in the Romanian government and intervened in every aspect of people's lives. Due to governmental policies, Romania's economic performance was in decline, resulting in a Gross Domestic Product growth rate of -3.1% in 1989 compared with the previous year (Cornia & Sipos, 1991).

During the early 1990's, the social cost of the political transition from a communist regime to a European community member was enormous, this period of restructuring also came with a significant decline in real household income and saving; increased unemployment; decreased public spending for health, child welfare, education, and other public services; and increased numbers of children who lived in poverty. Overall, Romania's economy continued to fall with the Gross Domestic Product growth rate plummeting by -18.6% in 1990 compared with the previous year (Cornia & Sipos, 1991). Therefore, Romania encountered massive difficulties in caring for institutionalized children. Even though Romania became part of the European Community in 2007, in the same year it was estimated that 350,000 children lived with at least one parent working abroad, and 126,000 were left behind after the migration of both parents (i.e., the parents left Romania permanently and the children were reared by relatives) (Toth, Munteanu, & Bleahu, 2008). Even though Romania is trailing most all European Union countries, in the recent years, vast resources have been invested for improving the quality of institutional care and Romanian child protection system has been drastically changed. Thus, the residential care facilities are much smaller and new standards of care and safety have been implemented (Bejenaru & Tucker, 2014).

Romania's transition from a communist country to a European Community member was and continues to be a difficult journey. These political, economic, and social changes within the macrosystem have affected institutionalized children, or children placed in alternative services, as well as millions of other Romanians.

Conclusion

In summary, the Romanian childcare system has undergone a series of substantial changes since the fall of the communist regime. With this transition, came more access to institutions from those on the outside, allowing the plight of institutionalized children in Romania to become known to the world. At first, many foreign countries made humanitarian efforts to support the Romanian childcare

system, providing temporary aid and assistance for several years. However, as the new Romanian government gained more traction, it began taking steps to reform and rebuilt its child welfare system from the ground up. While the reform process has been ongoing for many years and continues to evolve, the world should be aware that the images of Romanian orphans in institutions are now only bitter memories to those who were in the system. Now, rather than spending child welfare resources on institutional care, the Romanian government focuses on maintaining the children in their own homes, and when that is not possible then placing the children in a home environment with a family member who, as Bronfenbrenner suggested, can help them meet their global needs.

Questions

1. The microsystem is described as bidirectional in this chapter. Describe a microsystem in your own life and how it is bidirectional.
2. Describe how a family environment can provide a better developmental setting for a child than a residential institution.
3. In your own opinion, which type of institutional privation was most detrimental to a child's overall development? Explain.
4. Think back to the exosystem section, provide two examples of a possible trickle-down effect from the policy changes described in the text considering an entity from each ecological system.

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