THEORIES OF COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

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PSY 357: Community Psychology

2/2/2023

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Radical Honesty Due next Friday 2/10 (24hr grace) Questions?
- Class slides made available after lecture on website under "course schedule and materials" tab
- Course Website: https://psych357.commons.gc.cuny.edu/
- Course website also linked via Blackboard

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

Ecological Relationships

Bronfenbrenner 1977

Social Critique

Levine & Levine 1992

Action & Context

Lewin 1951

Collaboration

Various Theorists 1988

Complexity of Help

Various Theorists 1973,1997, 1994

Systems & Roles

Various Theorists 1997

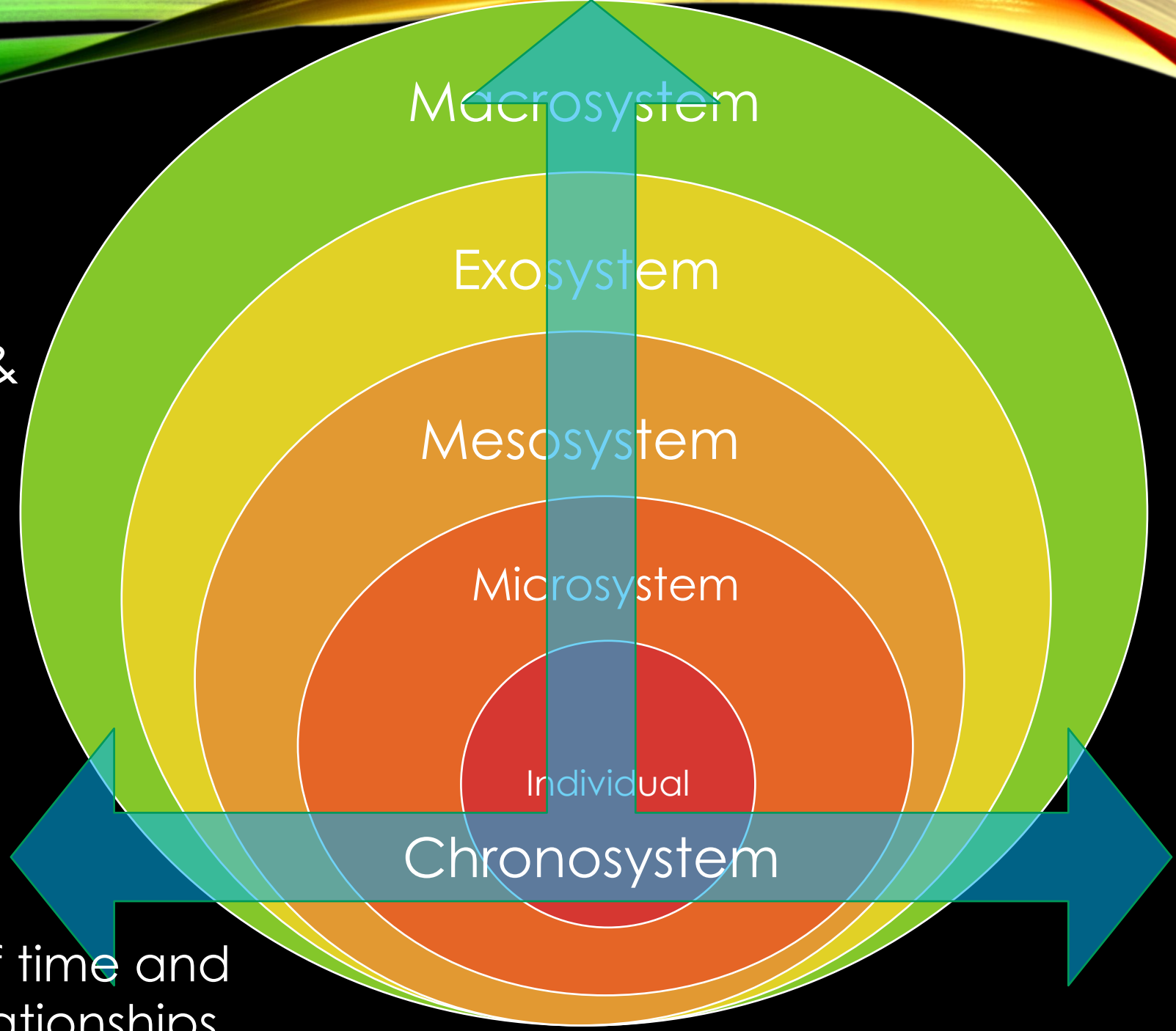
Prevention

Cowen 1999

ECOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Macrosystem: Societal and ideological
- Exosystem: Institutional & extrapersonal
- Mesosystem: Peripheral & Extrinsic
- Microsystem: Connected & interpersonal
- Individual: Internal & Personal

Chronosystem: Influences of time and context on all levels and relationships



ECOLOGY EXERCISE

- Community issue: LGBTQ high school students and Peer-to-peer violence
- At the individual level who is most vulnerable?
- What are the factors present in the micro level that contribute to and prevent violence?
- Are there interactions/relationships present at the meso level that increase or decrease the prevalence of this issue?
- What institutions, policies, or contexts exists or don't exist on the exo level that influence this issue?
- What larger societal or cultural narratives influence the prevalence of this issue?

The social context influences what we deem "important"

We must always critically analyze norms, history, and dominant discourses

Let's look beyond individual or even situation based models.

We need to question our power as researchers and interrogate social issues

SOCIAL CRITIQUE

Theories of social critique emphasize the importance of questioning social context, cultural norms, and more recently the processes of standardization.

SOCIAL CRITIQUE

- In small groups discuss and select one cultural, social, and/or societal norm or standard that you find limiting, confusing, problematic, or just ridiculous. Try to narrow to one
- First discuss why you find this norm to be limiting, confusing, problematic, or ridiculous.
- Next talk about where you believe these norms come from/originated
- Next talk a little bit about what they look like today compared to their origin.
- Finally talk about if you think it should change and what you would prefer.

ACTION & CONTEXT

- The central idea of Action research is that a research project must do more than produce an academic paper.
- In order to "do more" a research must not only be aware of the context of the community but the historical context and the contexts of change.
- Contextualism as a theory states that research should take place within the context of the community or the issue itself.
- Action & Context directly reject the idea that good social science research can or should be done in a controlled lab setting.

COLLABORATION

- Theories on collaboration discuss how important and beneficial it is for research to be done in collaboration.
- Collaboration can mean with the community, with other researchers, with other fields, or with anyone or thing else that will help to address the issue
- Community Psych researchers attempt to incorporate collaboration at all levels of a research project.

COMPLEXITY OF HELP

These theories emphasize that there are many ways help and support can look. Especially when considering the many different needs and contexts of communities.

See communities as experts of their own experiences and as such they know best what they need.

Theories emphasizing the complexity of help posit that help doesn't need to be "professional" to be valid

A direct counter to the old psychological researcher mindset of "I know what's best for you."

SYSTEMS & ROLES

Deficit

Context

This set of theories attempt to move way from traditional deficit, and unequal comparison models of research.

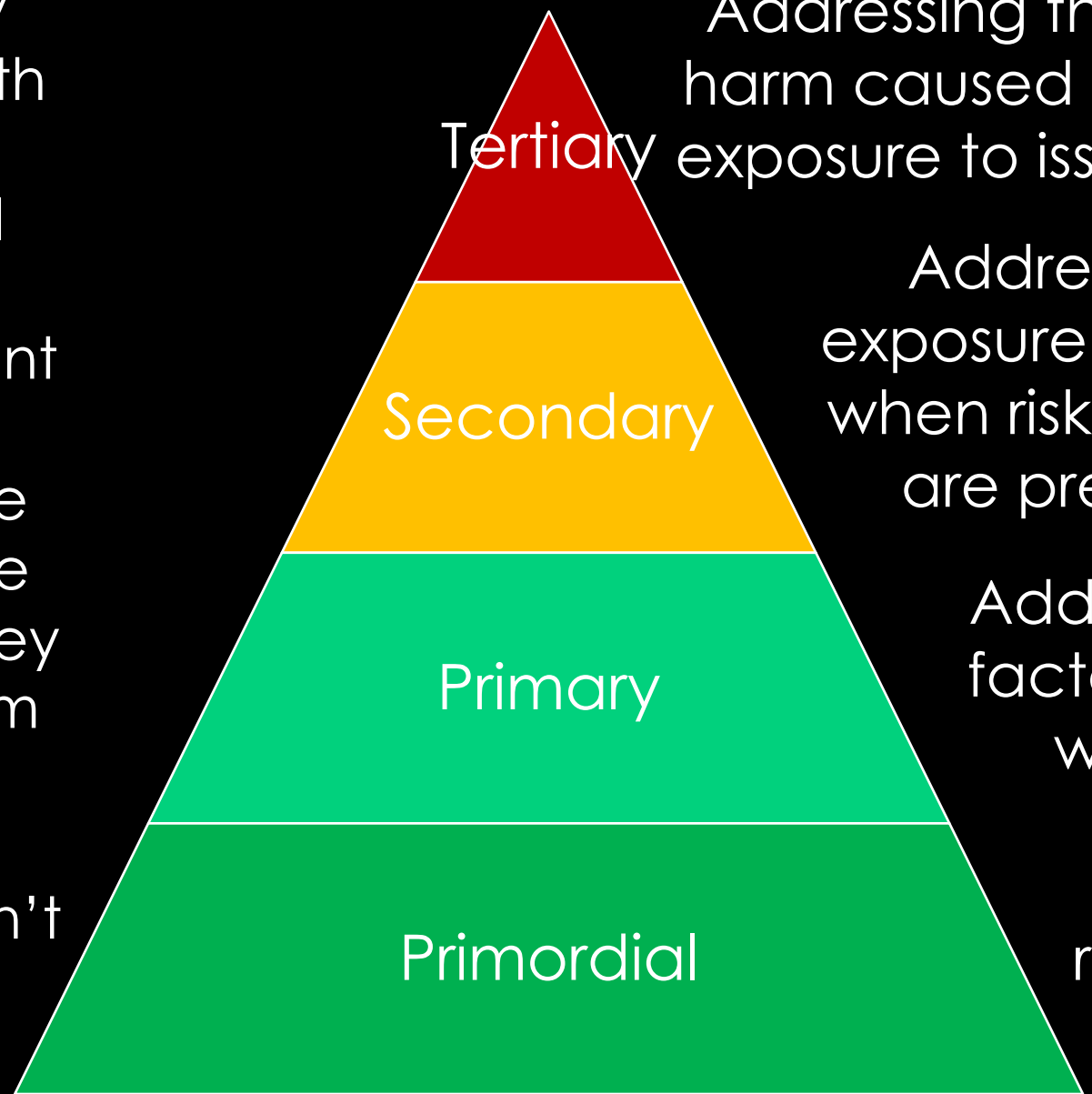
Often based on and perpetuating epistemological violence, deficit models often blame communities for their own "abnormality" or lack of "success".

These theories instead move toward community empowerment, gather resources/support, and shift dominant narratives

Theories on context and roles attempt to understand systemic, political, environmental, and social context

PREVENTION

- Prevention is a theory rooted in public health that emphasizes preventing harm and issues rather than reaction or punishment
- Recognizes the simple fact that people solve issues better when they are prepared for them
- Understands that community issues don't just pop up out of nowhere



Addressing the harm caused by exposure to issue

Addressing exposure to issue when risk factors are present

Addressing the risk factors associated with an issue

Addressing the root and/or legacy of an issue

PREVENTION RESEARCH SCENARIO

- We're all part of a nationwide research team working with Black and Brown young adults (18-25) from NYC. The team is tasked with better understanding and addressing a sharp increase in STI's within this population.
- Map out the different levels of prevention.
  - **Primordial:** What are some potential larger systemic roots of or ideologies causing this issue?
  - **Primary:** What are the risk factors and what could you do to reduce exposure to risk factors associated with this issue?
  - **Secondary:** How do you address/prevent exposure to the issue if the risk factors are already present?
  - **Tertiary:** How to you center and care for those students who are currently dealing with STI's?