RECONSTRUCTING AGENCY IN DEVELOPMENTAL AND EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
INCLUSIVE SYSTEMS AS CONCENTRIC SPACE

Paul Downes
Reconstructing Agency in Developmental and Educational Psychology

This book reconstructs the foundations of developmental and educational psychology and fills an important gap in the field by arguing for a specific spatial turn so that human growth, experience and development focus on not only time but also space. This regards space not simply as place. Highlighting concrete cross-cultural relational spaces of concentric and diametric spatial systems, the book argues that transition between these systems offers a new paradigm for understanding agency and inclusion in developmental and educational psychology, and for relating experiential dimensions to causal explanations.

The chapters examine key themes for developing concentric spatial systemic responses in education, including school climate, bullying, violence, early school leaving prevention and students’ voices. Moreover, the book proposes an innovative framework of agency as movement between concentric and diametric spatial relations for a reconstruction of resilience. This model addresses the vital neglected issue of resistance to sheer cultural conditioning and goes beyond the foundational ideas of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory as well as Vygotsky, Skinner, Freud, Massey, Bruner, Gestalt and postmodern psychology to reinterpret them in dynamic spatial systemic terms.

Written by an internationally renowned expert, this book is a valuable resource for academics, researchers and postgraduate students in the areas of educational and developmental psychology, as well as related areas such as personality theory, health psychology, social work, teacher education and anthropology.

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*Paul Downes*
For my wife, Aleksandra Jasiewicz, and our children, Eva and Michael Downes, with love
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Part I

Setting the scene: key features of a concentric spatial turn for developmental and educational psychology

Agency and inclusive systems
1 Introduction
A specific spatial turn for developmental and educational psychology beyond diametric spatial opposition

The domination of time over space in developmental psychology has become a truism, built into the very nomenclature of development presupposing growth in time. Yet, a different conception of development, not reliant on organismic assumptions of growth, is possible. This is one that examines development in terms of spatial movements, whether at the level of the individual or wider systems.

Inscribing the centrality of space for developmental and educational psychology is not to pit space against time, within some kind of diametric opposition. It requires, firstly, uncovering how foundational concepts of developmental and educational psychology are thoroughly imbued with spatial assumptions. To reveal how specific spatial structural assumptions silently pervade psychology is a key task of this book. In doing so, the relevance of these spaces to agency and to inclusive systems needs to emerge.

The familiarity of space needs to be undone. To do so requires a specific spatial turn for developmental and educational psychology. Space is a concept that is far from being neglected in these disciplines, at least at the level of individual cognition. Naive notions of space, as fixed and noninteractive, have been questioned since Piaget; this highlights that the everyday, taken-for-granted Euclidean space is a construct, and not the only possible one.

There is evidently a strong concern with spatial issues at the level of the individual, especially in relation to cognition in psychology. This ranges across various domains of perception, memory, learning and attention. For example, it includes two-dimensional spatial skills in mathematics achievement (Carr et al., 2018), young children’s perceptual skills in inserting objects into an aperture (Shutts, Örnkloo, von Hofsten, Keen, & Spelke, 2009) and the role of spatial prototypes in memory retrieval, such as regarding bias towards region centres (Plumert & Hund, 2001). It extends to pre-schoolers’ spatial thinking during spatial play (Borriello & Liben, 2018) and understanding the relation between language and spatial cognition in young children (Miller, Patterson, & Simmering, 2016). Nevertheless, the power of space as a mode of relation, both as a medium of experience and to frame understanding, as well as to foster system change, has, at best, been only partially acknowledged in psychology. Spatial concepts at system levels require much further scrutiny, including interrogation of relational
spaces, as spaces of mediation. There is a need to expand the terrain of relevance for space in developmental and educational psychology, in both its scope and its range of conceptualisations.

Science has long recognised that there is no such thing as naive direct observation, even in physics (Duhem, 1905), and that all scientific observation is theory-laden (Popper, 1959; Lakatos, 1970; Feyerabend, 1988) and steeped in paradigmatic assumptions (Kuhn, 1970). In psychology, Freud (1915) already acknowledged that observations are theory-laden and further interpreted theoretically (S.E. 14, 117), though Watson (1914) sought a purely objective, theory-less science for behaviourism. Selection of attention to observational regularities in psychology depends on what questions are being asked and the level of description of the factual observed regularities (Fodor & Pylyshyn, 1988; von Eckardt, 1993; Teo, 2008). While recognising the need to distinguish different levels of a research programme, including theory, data, methodology and the phenomenon as object of study in developmental science (Winegar, 1997), this separation of levels risks overlooking the key point that theory-ladenness is built into the data of empirical observation, so such levels may not be so neatly distinguished, even for subsequent integration across levels. A further step being taken here is to examine how theory-ladenness in observations in psychology is not simply random or haphazard but is structurally arranged in spatial terms and imbued with hidden spatial assumptions. Moreover, these spatial assumptions are not necessarily fixed and immovable but may be malleable.

A neglected, yet recurring, theory-laden feature of space in developmental and educational psychology is that of diametric spatial opposition. Diametric spatial oppositions divide into mirror image inverted symmetries (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, 1973), such as above/below, us/them, good/bad. This pervasive structure of diametric space underpins key features in the psychological thought of, as illustrative examples, Erikson, Sullivan, Klein, Skinner, Freud and Maslow. Erikson’s life stage theory of development pits each stage as being a choice between diametrically opposed tasks, such as trust versus mistrust in early infancy, identity versus role confusion in adolescence, intimacy versus isolation in adulthood. Erikson (1972) extends this diametric oppositional spatial relation to that between generations as part of an intergenerational identity struggle:

much horrible hate and much resultant paralysis is . . . transferred to the intergenerational struggle where it appears to be hopelessly raw and untrained in comparison to the age-old stance and stamina of uniformed and disciplined military behavior. This probably is the cause of occasional enactments of totally ‘senseless’ cruelty . . . for the sake of a vindictive illusion of extinguishing the established.

(p. 700)

A similar predilection for diametric oppositional space is a hallmark of Sullivan’s (1953) conception of early development, where the “me” differentiates into a good-me, bad-me and not-me. The self develops here through diametric spatial
oppositions of good/bad, me/not-me or other than me. Klein (1946) proposes a related view of diametric spatial opposition as a dividing process in the early years; occurring as early as in the first three or four months, ‘the mechanism of splitting . . . [is] one of the earliest ego-mechanisms and defences against anxiety’ (Klein, 1946/1997, p. 6). Though located in a different tradition of psychology from Erikson, Sullivan and Klein, radical behaviourism is similarly bound by a diametric spatial intuition through its guiding framework of positive and negative reinforcements (Skinner, 1974). Even the polar opposite to the organismic growth metaphor relied upon in many developmental theories, namely, behaviourist environmental conditioning through reinforcement of Skinner (1974), is tethered to the same basic underlying spatial assumption of diametric oppositional space.

Freud’s (1912–13) discussion of obsessional neurosis is similarly framed through a diametric spatial mirror image inverted symmetry opposition of love versus hate, as a feature of ambivalence, where he observes a denial of ‘hostile feelings against the dead loved one’ and a ‘contrast between conscious pain and unconscious satisfaction over the death that has occurred’ (p. 61). A mirror image is not identical but rather a left–right inversion. Such a mirror image reversal as diametric spatial opposition is central to Freud’s accounts of obsessional neurosis. In Wolf Man, Freud (1926) strongly emphasises the interplay of two diametrically opposing states:

In following up a single instinctual repression we have thus had to recognize a convergence of two such processes. The two instinctual impulses have been overtaken by repression – sadistic aggressiveness towards the father and a tender passive attitude to him – form a pair of opposites.

(p. 106)

The passive orientation is a mirror image of the active one involved in aggression, while the tender attitude towards the father is a mirror image of the sadistic attitude. He extends this diametric spatial structure, in effect, making it a general feature of obsessional neurosis:

The symptoms belonging to this [obsessional] neurosis fall, in general, into two groups, each having an opposite trend. They are either prohibitions, precautions and expiations – that is, negative in character – or they are, on the contrary, substitutive satisfactions which often appear in symbolic disguise.

(Freud, 1926, p. 112)

Diametric space is arguably a hallmark of much of Freud’s thought (Downes, 2003a, 2012, 2013). Moreover, in a US sample of ninth and twelfth grade and undergraduate students, Sincoff (1992) has observed that subjects who score highest on repression scales are statistically more likely to adopt judgements dividing reality into diametric oppositions between good and bad across all these age levels. In effect, they project a diametric spatial structure onto the world, constructing
mirror image inversions. This diametric spatial understanding needs to be understood as not simply mere metaphor or analogy but as a prior spatial system.

In humanistic psychology, often setting itself up as an antidote to psychoanalysis and behaviourism, Maslow’s well-known hierarchy of needs is again locked into a diametric spatial split between mind and body, in Cartesian fashion, between basic bodily needs and psychological growth needs. This dominion of diametric space in developmental and educational psychology requires much more interrogation. What is the epistemological status of this diametric space? Is this diametric oppositional space fixed or can it be made malleable? Is it part of a wider spatial system and, if so, at what system levels does it operate? This diametric spatial structure as a theory-laden feature of psychological phenomena is not simply mere error or a random feature, but is rather an organising structure as the gateway to a more fundamental questioning in psychology.

Diametric spatial opposition and mirror image inverted symmetry additionally underpin the us/them structure that frames understanding of the supposed norm versus the other in developmental and educational psychology and far beyond. The ‘other’ becomes a reification, a static category rendered passive and inert in this role as mere object of the gaze from the vantage point of the supposed norm. An intersubjective process of othering is prominently challenged by de Beauvoir (1949/1989) in *The Second Sex* to critique a construct of ‘woman’ in terms of a male reference point as the norm. Similarly, Said’s (1978) *Orientalism* offers an excoriating assault on Western projections onto Eastern cultures which construct the East as the other; the other is dehumanised of lived experience, as a static, lifeless exhibit in ‘an imaginary museum without walls’ (p. 166). Like the construct of ‘woman’ as the second sex, Eastern cultures become defined abstractly in unitary terms of contrasts with a Western culture as norm.

De Beauvoir and Said’s critiques of ‘othering’ invite challenge to this diametric oppositional space of exclusion as a framing condition for construction of ‘the other’. This exclusion renders concrete groups and individuals inert and lifeless, as an epistemological violence leading also to ethnocentrism, as abstract categories of the other (Teo, 2008). There is a need to challenge the hard borders between ingroups and outgroups constituted by diametric spatial oppositions for ‘the possibility of a space which does not replicate the exclusions of the Same and the Other’ (Rose, 1993, p. 137). For an inclusion of the ‘other’ that dismantles its status of otherness, as distinct from exclusion of the other through the diametric space of us/them, a different space is needed. How can the claims of diametric space, often universal and sweeping, as a glue holding central theories of developmental and educational psychology together, become reconstructed from being a taken-for-granted spatial intuition?

Invoking a systems questioning for diametric space as part of a wider dynamic system requires recognition of a further neglected spatial feature of ecological approaches in psychology. In comparisons between Gibson’s (1979) ecological model of direct perception and Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1995) wider ecological systems models, there is far from agreement as to whether these two ecological approaches are compatible with each other (Branco, 1997). Nevertheless, both proponents of the basic commonality of these ecological models (Tudge, Gray, &
Hogan, 1997) and opponents (Branco, 1997) agree on one central feature of both as ecological models. This central feature is that of the assumption ‘that development occurs within the individual who is not separable from his or her environment’ (Tudge et al., 1997, p. 87); ‘the fundamental similarity, as well as the main shared contribution, of Gibson and Bronfenbrenner lies in the emphasis on the role of environmental structures associated with a holistic approach, linking together the individual and the environment’ (Branco, 1997, p. 314; my italics). In other words, ecological approaches pivotally rely upon assumptions of connection and separation, assumptions that are ineluctably spatial preconditions.

Diametric spatial opposition presupposes division and separation between the individual and environment or system; ecological systems approaches represent a direct challenge to such a diametric spatial framing precondition. The zoologist and evolutionist Ernst Haekel is usually credited with initiating the term ecology, proposing in 1873 a new science of ecology (oekologie) from the Greek word oik, for living place or home, to study organisms in their environment, which he treated as inseparable parts of a whole (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). Moving beyond diametric spatial oppositions is key in a quest for a spatial ecological systems approach for developmental and educational psychology.

A specific concentric spatial turn: beyond empty space and chronocentrism to an acceleration of focus on concentric space developing early Bronfenbrenner’s systems theory

Developmental and educational psychology are remarkably insulated from currents of understanding in other related disciplines, such as geography, anthropology, sociology of education and law, specifically regarding space. Geographical concerns with a spatial turn involve relational space (Jones, 2009) to ‘liberate’ space from traditional Western associations of stasis and closure (Massey, 2005, p. 19). Longstanding concerns in structural anthropology observe cross-cultural examples of concentric and diametric spatial structures (Lévi-Strauss, 1962, 1963, 1973). Space is a broader concept than simply place, as a holistic background relation that is more than the sum of its physical and symbolic place elements. Educational concerns examine spatial processes of exclusion (Ferrare & Apple, 2010) and legal frameworks have interrogated space as an interactive medium building on post-Newtonian physics (Tribe, 1990). All of these concerns have been left largely hors de vue in developmental and educational psychology; interdisciplinary spatial understandings have been largely excised from the domain of relevance of psychology. This is a concern even if one does not subscribe to a fully-fledged unity of science framework.¹ This largescale lack of an interdisciplinary spatial questioning has occurred despite the widespread reception of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems framework, which relies on a further feature of a spatial systemic model.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) systemic conception in developmental psychology explicitly relied on concentric space. He viewed the ‘ecological environment . . . topologically as a nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained
within the next’ (p. 22), like Russian dolls. He distinguished a range of different system level interactions, ranging from micro relations in the immediate setting to meso-, exo- and macrosystem levels of generalised patterns. For Bronfenbrenner (1979), all of these are mutually embedded in a concentric structure. A mesosystem involves interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates – for a child, home, school neighbourhood and peer group and, for an adult, family, work and social life. An exosystem involves one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect or are affected by what happens in the setting containing the developing person. A thesis of this book is that Bronfenbrenner’s concentric structure of nested systems is not simply a visual device to aid understanding or a mere metaphor but also reveals a more fundamental insight into space, where space is no mere metaphor.

Concentric spatial systems offer a meaningful understanding of systems that has been largely overlooked in developmental and educational psychology. This oversight is despite the recognition of such cross-culturally observed concentric systems as being meaningful in structural anthropology (Lévi-Strauss, 1962, 1963, 1973). A feature of this neglect is that concentric spatial systems, embedded in Bronfenbrenner’s systemic framework, offer a structure of space that challenges Western spatial assumptions. Concentric spatial systems can help uncover and challenge Western-biased colonialist assumptions in the very experience of space itself.

A conception of space as patterned, through concentric structures, challenges Descartes’ treatment of space, so influential in the history of Western thought. He referred to ‘empty space, which almost everyone is convinced is mere non-entity’ (Descartes, 1954, p. 200). Recognition of concentric spatial systems does not treat space as empty and homogenous. A related influence in Western thought is the treatment of the child at birth as a blank slate, a *tabula rasa*, as part of a tradition of Western thought emanating from Locke. Locke (1693/1964) rejected the notion of innate ideas, namely, the belief that some ideas exist in the mind without the benefit of experience.

A blank page view of the child, or indeed adult, again assumes a kind of empty space, without pattern, upon which the environment inscribes itself. Together with diametric space as positive and negative reinforcements, this empty space assumption for the individual underpins behaviourist assumptions of environmental conditioning, to purportedly move beyond issues of freedom and dignity (Skinner, 1972). Behaviourist Watson’s (1928) discredited warning lest ‘the child gets shot through with too many of these love reactions’ (p. 75) from the parent, as part of his belief that children are made, not born, operates in the *tabula rasa* tradition of blank space psychology.

Developed more than a decade before Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) seminal work, it is Lévi-Strauss’ framework in structural anthropology that offers an understanding of dynamic spatial movement for concentric structured systems observed cross-culturally. Lévi-Strauss (1963) cites a range of cross-cultural observations of concentric structures by a number of anthropologists. These include: the village
plan of Omarakana in the Trobriand Islands, published by Malinowski; the Baduj of western Java and the Negri-Sembilan of the Malay peninsula, observed by de Jong; the village of the Winnebago tribe observed by Radin and an archaeological finding in the Lower Mississippi Valley.

The consensus view of anthropologists is that Malinowski was more sensitive than Lévi-Strauss to local context, as the former spent more time living in the native culture (e.g., Leach, 1982). Thus, the fact that the concentric opposition observation in the Trobriand Islands comes from Malinowski, and not Lévi-Strauss directly, strengthens its evidential reliability. Concentric structures can be found also in Islamic, Japanese, Russian, Chinese, Jewish, Celtic, African, ancient Greek and Estonian contexts (Downes, 2003a, 2012), as well as in Scandinavian mythology (Molenaar, 1982). Jung (1936/1985) locates the concentric mandala structure in Buddhist, Hindu and Christian traditions, while one of the earliest painted examples of a mandala known to exist in Japan is the Womb World mandala or Garbhadhatu (Taizōkai), in Kyoto, from the second half of the ninth century (Leidy, 2008, p. 124).

That the concentric spatial structure for systems foregrounded in early Bronfenbrenner is not a space to be taken lightly is evident from even an initial examination of such concentric spatial structures in diverse cultural contexts. For example, with regard to the Lower Mississippi Valley, Lévi-Strauss (1963) states:

> We are therefore dealing with a type of [concentric] structure which in America extends far back into antiquity, and whose later analogues were to be found in preConquest Peru and Bolivia and . . . in the social structure of the Sioux in North America and of the Ge and related tribes in South America . . . This latter structure however was not simply bipolar but forming six concentric octagonal figures.

( p. 143)

Whether interpreted as representations or projections, and resisting appeals to an anthropological timelessness (Brickman, 2003) or neat periodisations of the premodern, modern and postmodern, further ancient examples of concentric spatial structures abound. Kriiska, Lougas, and Saluaar’s (1997, pp. 30–31) excavations of the Stone Age settlement site and ruin of the stone cist grave of the Early Metal Age in Kasekula, Estonia, reveal concentric structures (see also Vedru, 1997 for similar findings in Estonia). Moreover, Mandel (1984) highlights 3,000-year-old ring-graves (kivikirstkalmed) in Muuksi, Vohma and Kasekula, Estonia, which have a concentric structure. This concentric structure contrasts with the later (tarandkalmed) graves from the third to fifth century in Jaagupi, Estonia, which have a diametric structure. Mandel (1984) notes that from the twelfth century at Kaku, in Saaremaa, Estonia, the circular, concentric structure of the burials vanishes. In Jewish art and archaeology, Strange (1995) highlights the concentric structures of the ‘Decorated Stone Doe of the Hulda Gates’ (p. 68) and the Zodiac from the Central Panel of the Mosaic floor of the sixth-century Beth Alpha synagogue (p. 100).
The contrasting structural relation of *diametric spatial opposition* has also been observed cross-culturally, by Lévi-Strauss (1962): he notes that examples of diametric dualism ‘abound’ (p. 135), citing specific tribes in North and South America. Moreover, the simple ‘subjective’ (Leach, 1965/2000, p. 111) everyday cross-cultural oppositions between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are structured in a diametric oppositional way. As Lévi-Strauss highlighted, a diametric spatial structure is one where a circle is split in half by a line which is its diameter or where a square or rectangle is similarly divided into two equal halves (see Figure 1.1). In a concentric spatial structure, one circle is inscribed in another larger circle (or square); in pure form, the circles share a common central point (see Figure 1.2).

*Figure 1.1 Diametric Dualism*

*Figure 1.2 Concentric Dualism*
The Chinese yin/yang is perhaps the best known example of concentric space and arguably also diametric space (Downes, 2011). It is an example of two concentric dualisms (the light within the dark half and the dark within the light half) embedded within two halves as a basic diametric structure. Moreover, in Chinese culture, yin/yang was conceived as a product of a prior process – a prior concentric process.

The Chinese initial world egg myth is described by Wilhelm (1977): ‘The separation of heaven and earth out of the cosmogenic egg is almost uniformly the first act of this process of creation (p. 191). The egg is itself a concentric structure, and Wilhelm’s (1977) quotation from an ancient Chinese text indicates that this concentric egg structure was viewed as preceding yin/yang:

[In the beginning], heaven and earth were in the state of chaos [hun-tun], which was shaped like an egg . . . After 18,000 years heaven and earth split apart, the yang, being limpid, formed heaven, the yin, being turbid formed earth.

(Wilhelm, 1977, pp. 191–192)

While other spatial structures may also be cross-culturally observed, Jahoda’s (1982) survey of anthropological research nevertheless concludes that ‘the simplest and at the same time most common type of symbolic classification . . . is the dual one’ (p. 251). In terms of cross-cultural pervasiveness, the bipolar structures of concentric and diametric dualisms are arguably more important than other types of opposition and can also be said to be the building blocks or constituent parts of more complex structures. ²

This book offers a specific spatial proposition. Not only are concentric spatial systems meaningful in cross-cultural terms, but their dynamic interaction with contrasting spatial systems of diametric space are also key for understanding agency in developmental and educational psychology. This argument builds on Lévi-Strauss’ (1962, 1963, 1973) cross-cultural observations of concentric and diametric structures for physical and social structures such as kinship and myths in structural anthropology. However, it reconceptualises key aspects of Lévi-Strauss’ framework regarding these spaces, expands the domain of relevance of these spatial systems and seeks to go beyond his structuralist assumptions.

Bronfenbrenner has led a spatial questioning of systems affecting the individual’s development with his concentric structured model of nested systems. This ecological systems model has been highly influential across numerous domains of developmental and educational psychology, and beyond. Among the many areas of developmental and educational psychology influenced by Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems frameworks, these include early school leaving (Abuya, Oketch, & Musyoka, 2013; Robison, Jaggers, Rhodes, Blackmon, & Church, 2017), educational attainment (Hentges & Wang, 2018), school bullying (Swearer et al., 2006; Lim & Hoot, 2015), resilience theory (Wang, 1997; Ungar, 2012, 2015), ethnic/racial identity (Cross, 2017), parental involvement (Seginer, 2006), family literacy (Anderson, Friedrich, Teichert, & Morrison, 2016), developmental cascades (Bornstein, Hahn, & Wolke, 2013) and
transitions (Diamond, Speigel-McGill, & Hanrahan, 1988). The influence of Bronfenbrenner’s systems theory is evident also in related areas such as developing Vygotskyan thought on learning (Rojas-Drummond, 2016), and in community psychology (Cowen, 2000) and social work (Hood, 2018). All of these themes are explored throughout this book.

Despite the widespread reception of his early work in particular, specific scrutiny of the spatial aspects of Bronfenbrenner’s systems approach has been scarce. There are some exceptions to the largescale silence on the concentric spatial aspect of his work. For example, MacFarlane (2000) argues that from a Maori perspective in New Zealand, encircling social systems are far from new ideas. Neal and Neal (2013) seek to challenge the concentric systemic structure in Bronfenbrenner’s ‘portrayal as a set of concentric circles . . . conceptualizing ecological systems as nested obscures the relationships between them’; ‘the precise relationships of systems to one another remain elusive’ (p. 723). They do so not only on grounds of the need for more precision but also with regard to the independence of different systems from each other.

Other commentary on Bronfenbrenner’s systems models in spatial terms raised concerns with developmental psychology textbooks placing the individual in the centre of these concentric circles (Darling, 2007). Placing the child at the centre rather than the microsystem is similarly criticised by Burman (2008) as it ‘returns the model to the isolated, abstracted individualism it set out to avoid’ (p. 122).

As with the systems thinkers of von Bertalanffy (1933/1962) in biology, and Bateson and Laing, Bronfenbrenner (1979) substantially expanded systemic understandings in psychology. Many of those relying on Bronfenbrenner’s frameworks adhere to either his earlier or later understandings but offer little change to the scope of the frameworks themselves. Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, and Karnik (2009) argue that many researchers fail to distinguish between Bronfenbrenner’s early work in 1979 and his later, supposedly ‘mature’, theory of development. This later PPCT (Process, Person, Context, Time) model gives emphasis to proximal processes in the search for primary mechanisms in immediate environment interactions with the individual (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). Tudge et al.’s (2009) critique includes a distancing from the earlier concentric spatial model of Bronfenbrenner (1979) in favour of these microsystem interactions as proximal processes. Tudge et al.’s (2009) assumption that Bronfenbrenner’s later model is more ‘mature’ than the earlier model, emphasising that concentric spatial systems requires explicit challenge (see also Downes, 2014).³

Morson (1995) coins the term ‘chronocentrism’ for a bias of the present, a doctrine that what is current must be superior to what went before; chronocentrism comes ‘most readily to groups that imagine they possess a wisdom . . . superior to that of their own predecessors’ (p. 9), as well of other cultures historically. Such a chronocentric bias has been applied to criminological research (Rock, 2005) and can be extended to developmental and educational psychology. An argument to foreground and develop the importance of concentric spatial systems in Bronfenbrenner’s early work is a dual challenge to chronocentrism. Firstly, it is a challenge to Tudge et al.’s (2009) view that Bronfenbrenner’s later work is the ‘mature’