

What Constitutes a Welcoming Community? Mankato Leaders Go Beyond the 'Welcome Wagon' for New Immigrants

Student Presenters: Sarah Lieske (Elementary Education),
Sadie Leidall (Elementary Education), Philip Munkvold (Elementary Education)
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Elizabeth Sandell (Elementary Education)

Undergraduate Research Symposium
Mankato, MN - April 21, 2014

Big ideas. Real-world thinking.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand how leaders responded to the community's increasing diversity and how newcomers experienced the community response.

1990-2010 Blue Earth County Population Shifts

{Race as a proxy of diversity}

Blue Earth County	1990	%	2010	%	% change calc. between 1990 & 2010	% change 2010 from 1990
Total Population	54,044	100.00	64,013	100.00	$(64,013 - 54,044) / 54,044$	+18.45
White	52,648	97.42	59,400	92.79	$(59,400 - 52,648) / 52,648$	+12.82
Minority/ not-White	2,396	2.58	5,619	8.77	$(5,619 - 2,396) / 2,396$	+135.51
Black	251	.46	1,741	2.72	$(1,741 - 251) / 251$	+593.62

Research Questions

- **How do leaders and newcomers conceptualize the ideas of diversity and welcoming?**
- **What are the leaders' goals for creating a community that welcomes non-European Americans?**
- **How do the leaders operationalize their concepts of diversity and welcoming?**
- **How do newcomers experience the welcoming efforts of the community?**

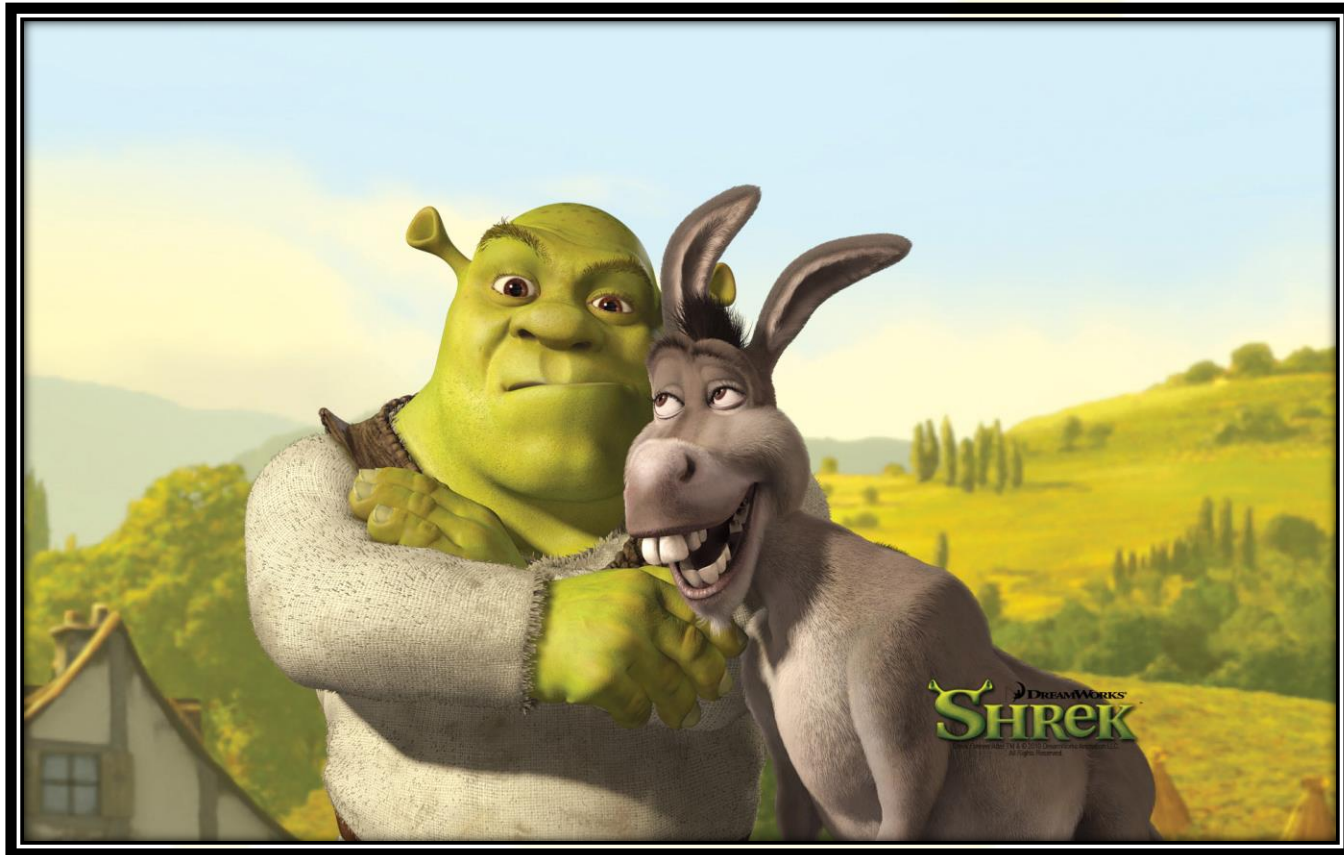
Community as an Ecological Environment

“The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls.”

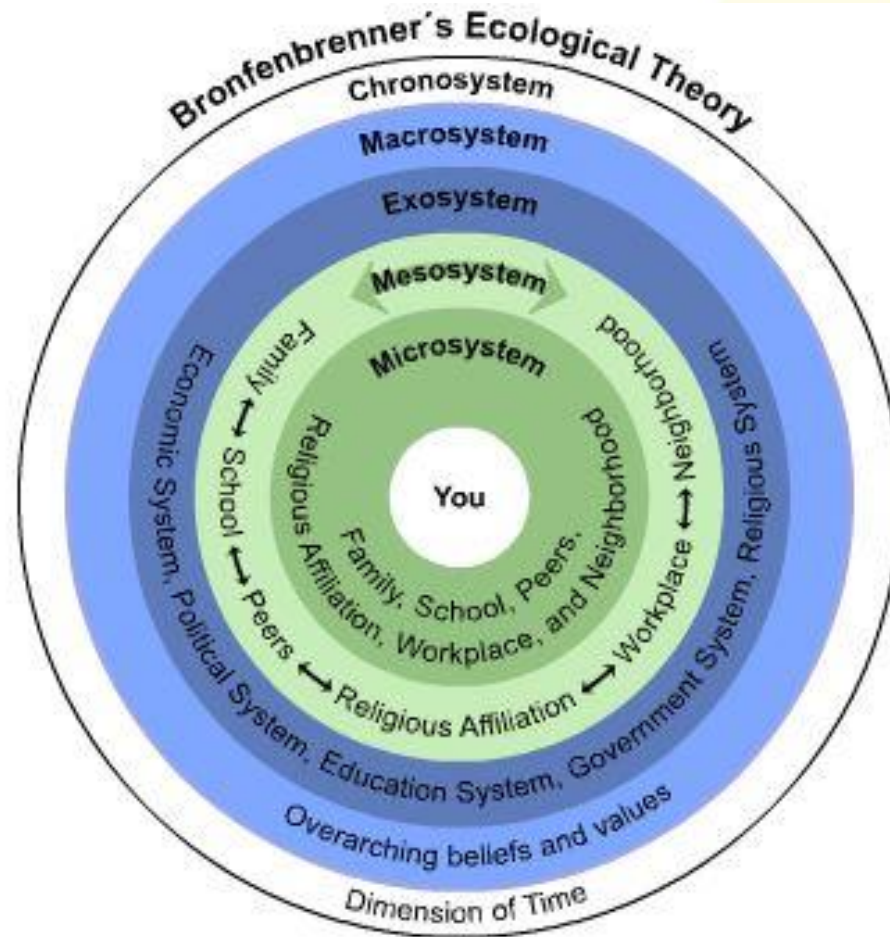
~ Urie Bronfenbrenner



Or perhaps more like an onion...

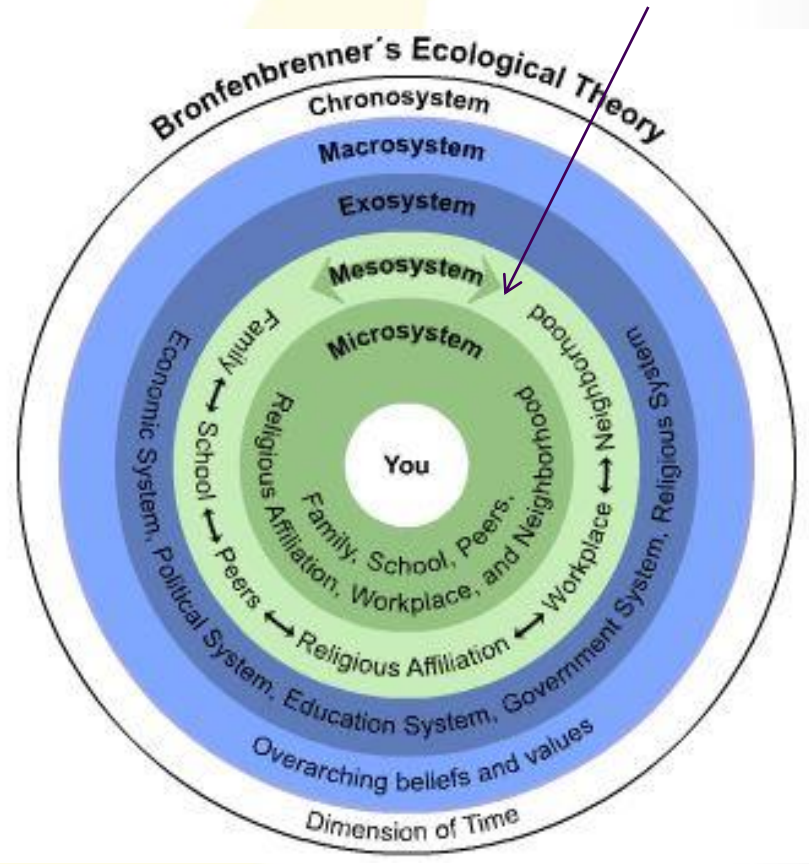
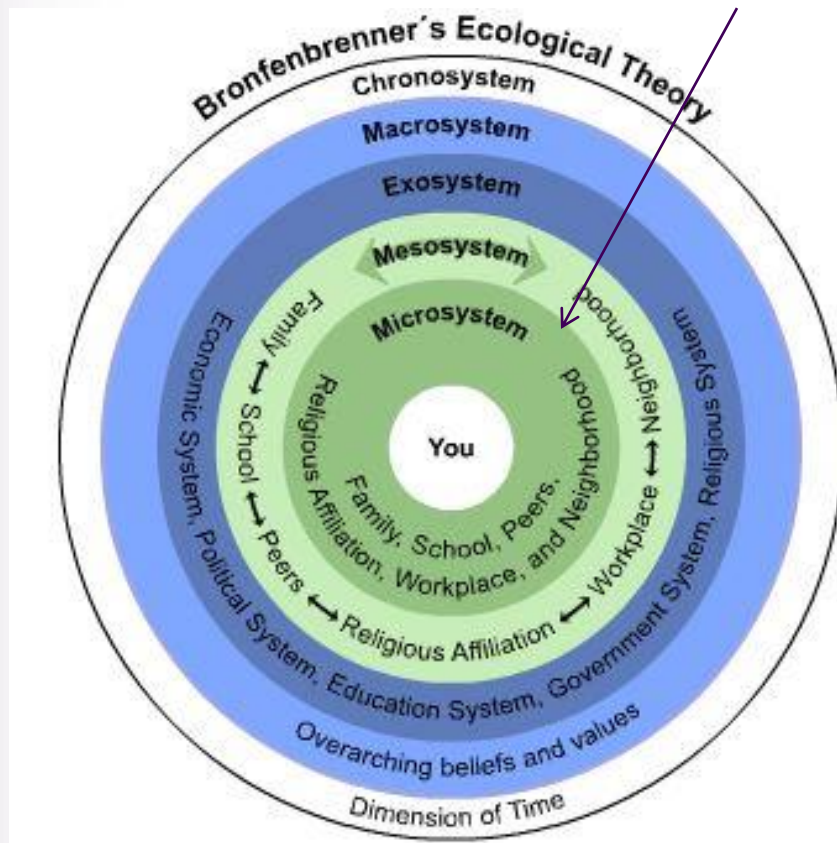


Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Human Development



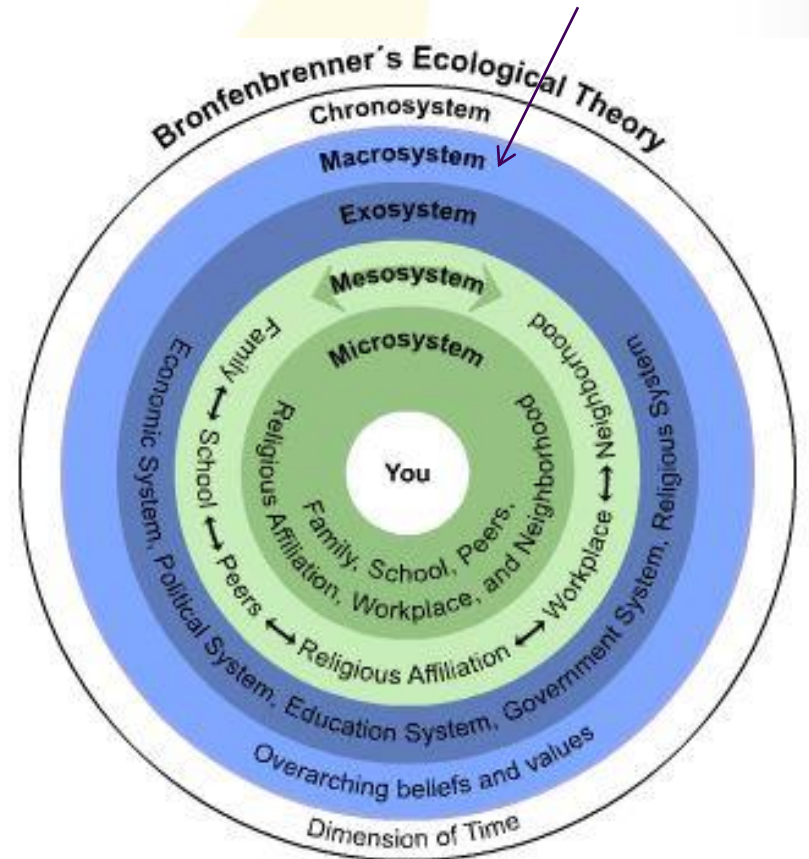
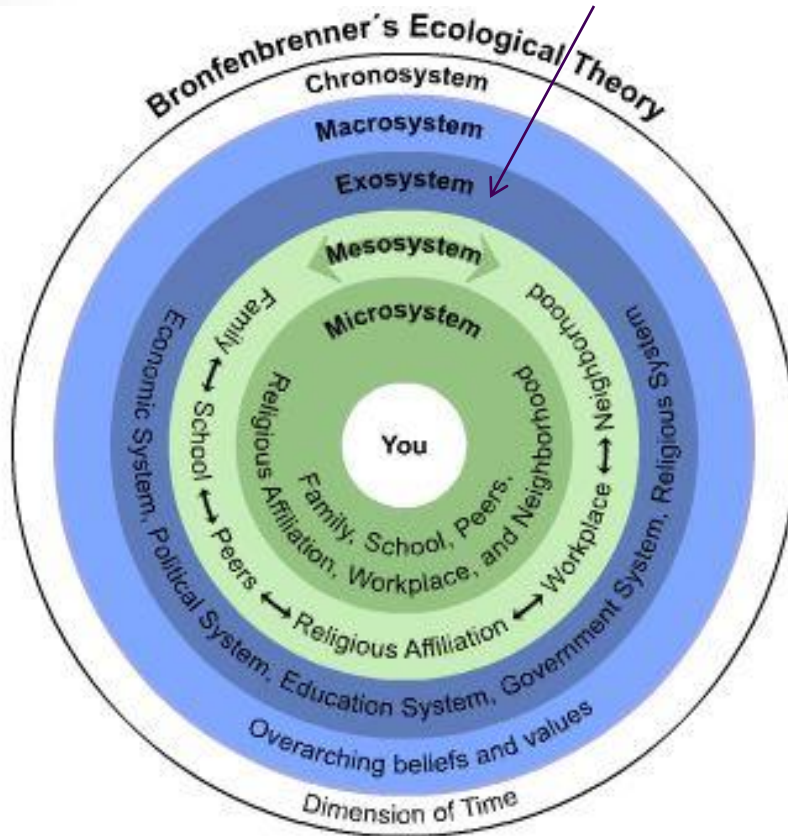
Microsystem

Mesosystem

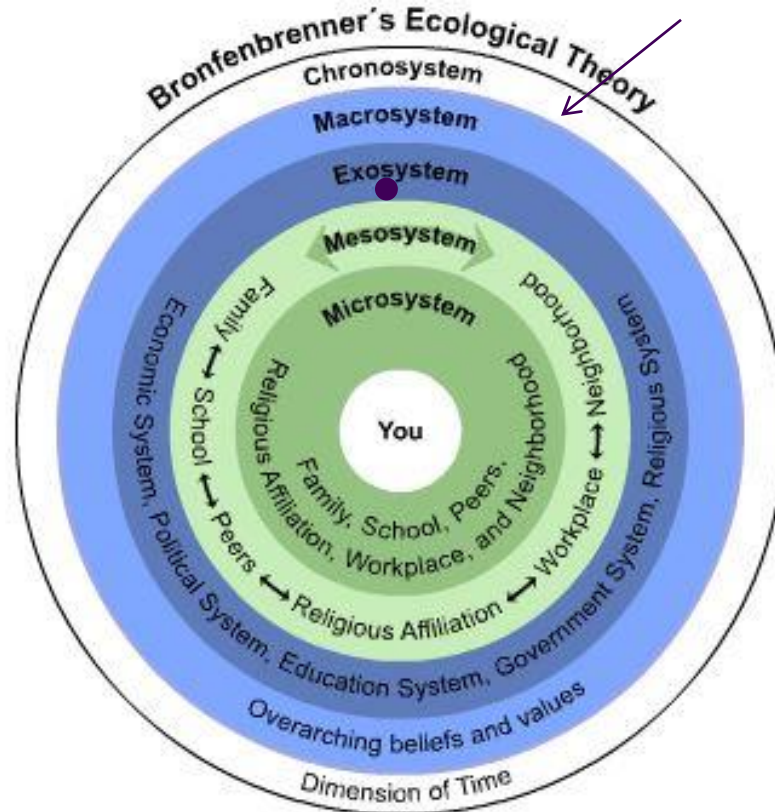


Exosystem

Macrosystem



Chronosystem



Methodology

- Review by Institutional Review Board for Research with Human Subjects (exempt status)
- Determine “convenience” sample
- Request informed consent from interviewees
- Conduct interviews with 2 community informants and 2 newcomers
- Transcribe interviews into text documents
- Code transcribed interviews according to systems identified by Bronfenbrenner
- Analyze interviews for themes, similarities and differences

Interview Questions

- What do you think of when you hear the word ‘diversity’?
- Has your understanding of that term changed over time?
- Can you point to any specific instances that have had an impact on you or changed your idea about diversity?
- Many Mankato leaders talk about making a “welcoming community” here ... How do you understand that?
- What programs or images do you think community leaders have put into place that help that transition happen in a positive way?
- Do you think there was any key person or incident that changed the direction in Mankato?
- What do you think is still needed to help all residents feel welcome in Mankato?
- Can you tell me about any cultural initiatives that you are involved in?
- What goals do you have for your parts of the community?
- Is there anything you want to say that we haven’t touched on?

Informants

- **“Alice,” Italian & Dutch American, female, between 45 and 55 years old, grandparent, director of private, non-profit organization**
- **“Clarice,” European American, female, between 35 and 45 years old, married, parent, teaches English as a second language**

Newcomers

- **“Irina,” Ukrainian American, female, between 25 and 35 years old, married to U.S. citizen, 2 children under age 3 years old**
- **“Svetlana,” Russian American, female, between 35 and 45 years old, married to U.S. citizen, naturalized U.S. citizen, 1 school-aged son**

Informant Themes

- **Microsystem Level Planning**

“A place where people can find housing, find a way to meet your goals, to meet your family goals to some degree anyway.” ~ Clarice

Informant Themes

- **Macrosystem Level Awareness**

“We have areas where they [Mankato residents] don’t understand it [diversity], they don’t want to understand it, they are afraid of it. People fear what they don’t understand.” ~ Alice

- **Exosystem Level Action**

“[When I go to] conferences and state meetings, [I notice] that in Mankato people we [agency staff members] communicate with each other. We all know what each other is doing...people are amazed that we have collaboration.” ~ Clarice

Newcomer Themes

- **Microsystem Level Goals**

“Kind of survival. This is really hard part of life. Probably for many people.” ~ Svetlana

- **Microsystem Level Needs**

“Providing people from different countries or different backgrounds with a support system or just supporting them in trying to make friends here or trying to find a job or trying to get a driver’s license.” ~ Irina

A Good Disconnect

“We as a nation need to be re-educated about the necessary and sufficient conditions for making human beings human. We need to be re-educated not as parents – but as workers, neighbors, and friends; and as members of the organizations, committees, boards – and, especially, the informal networks that control our social institutions and thereby determine the conditions of life for our families and their children.”

~ Urie Bronfenbrenner

Future Research Possibilities

- **Conduct more interviews to see community-wide themes and possibilities**
- **Compare Mankato with other communities in Minnesota and across the country**
- **Compare university communities with communities that do not have universities**

Acknowledgements

- **Dr. Elizabeth Sandell, research mentor**
- **Caryn Lindsay, MSU's Kearney International Center**
- **Interviewees**
- **Dr. Marilyn Hart, Director, MSU's Undergraduate Research Center**
- **MSU Foundation**
- **MSU's College of Education**
- **MSU's Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research**

Resources

- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology*, 46(1), 5-34.
- Fennelly, K. (2006). *State and local policy responses to immigration in Minnesota*. Century Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.hhh.umn.edu/people/kfennelly/pdf/slp_immigration_in_mn.pdf
- Fennelly, K. (2008). Local responses to immigrants in the midwestern United States. In B. Peterson & K. Tyler (Eds.), *Majority cultures and the everyday politics of ethnic difference: Whose house is this?* (pp. 94-113). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Howarth, C., Wagner, W., Magnusson, N., & Sammut, G. (2013), "It's only other people who make me feel black": Acculturation, identity, and agency in a multicultural community. *Political Psychology*, 31(1), 1-15.
- Oskamp, S. (2000). Multiple paths to reducing prejudice and discrimination. In S. Oskamp (Ed.), *Reducing prejudice and discrimination* (pp. 1-22). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Pettigrew, T. F. (1998). Intergroup contact theory. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49, 65-85.
- Phillimore, J. (2011). Refugees, acculturation strategies, stress and integration. *Journal of Social Policy*, 40(3), 575-593.
- Shrek*. Adamson, A. & Jenson, V. (Directors). (2001). [Motion Picture]. Santa Monica, CA: DreamWorks Pictures.

THANK YOU!!