

**EXPLORING BRONFENBRENNER’S BIOECOLOGICAL MODEL IN
YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE: A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN BIOECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS & DEVELOPMENT IN *THE
PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER* (1999) NOVEL**

A FINAL PROJECT

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STATEMENT OF WORK'S ORIGINALITY

STATEMENT OF WORK'S ORIGINALITY

I declare that this thesis is my own work and does not contain the work of others, either in part or in whole, except where explicitly stated through quotations and listed in the bibliography. If at a later date this statement is proven to be untrue, I am willing to accept academic sanctions, including dismissal of the thesis and revocation of the degree obtained.

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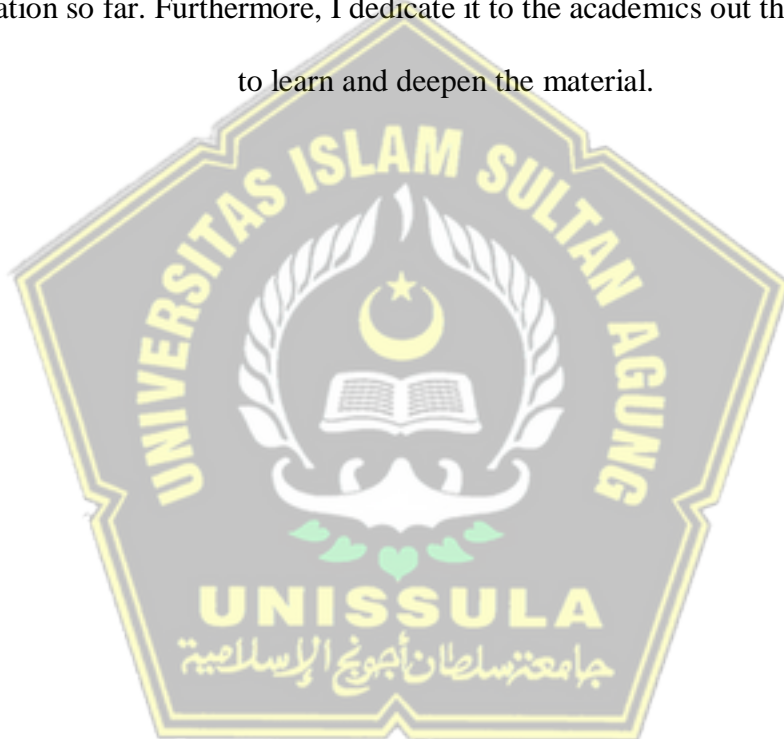
Wika Ariningti

MOTTO

“Keep pushing, you’re almost there” – the Universe and the Doctor

DEDICATION

I dedicated this undergraduate thesis to myself who has successfully completed this final project. Then, to my family who have encouraged me to complete my education so far. Furthermore, I dedicate it to the academics out there who want to learn and deepen the material.



ABSTRACT

Ariningti, Wika. 30802100046. Exploring Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model in Young Adult Literature: A Study of the Relationship Between Bioecological Systems & Development in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) Novel. Final Project of Language, Literature, and Culture Faculty. English Literature Study Program. Sultan Agung Islamic University Semarang. Advisor: Nailil Muna, S.S., M.A.

The Bioecological environment is understood as something far beyond the immediate situation that directly affects the developing person - the objects he responds to or the people he directly interacts with in the novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999).

This research examined the identification of bioecological systems and the role of proximal processes (PPCT) in the development of the main character. The objective is analysed how these systems and processes represented in relation to Charlie's development, drawing on Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory and the concept of Proximal Process. The final project adopted a qualitative approach, with the primary data taken from Stephen Chbosky's novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

The study shows that the surrounding social environment, including the microsystem (family and peers), mesosystem (interactions between family and peers), exosystem (family members' mental state), macrosystem (cultural values and norms), and chronosystem (the character's past experiences), affects Charlie's development. The proximal process is reflected in Charlie's personal characteristics, such as being curious yet withdrawn due to parenting patterns, and later shaped by supportive peer relationships that encourage social exploration, including smoking and romantic interactions. Context is observed through the roles of family, school, neighbourhood, and broader societal influences that affect Charlie's emotional well-being and growth. Time, as a developmental factor, is illustrated by the long-term effects of past abuse that continue to shape Charlie's relationships and coping strategies

Keywords: *bronfenbrenner's bioecology, development, microsystem, proximal process*

INTISARI

Ariningti, Wika. 30802100046. Menjelajahi Model Bioekologi Bronfenbrenner dalam Sastra Remaja Dewasa: Studi tentang Hubungan antara Sistem Bioekologi dan Perkembangan dalam Novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999). Tugas Akhir Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung Semarang. Pembimbing: Nailil Muna, S.S., M.A.

Lingkungan bioekologis dipahami sebagai sesuatu yang jauh melampaui situasi langsung yang secara langsung memengaruhi perkembangan individu—objek yang dia respons atau orang-orang yang dia interaksi secara langsung dalam novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999).

Penelitian ini menganalisis identifikasi sistem bioekologis dan peran proses proksimal (PPCT) dalam perkembangan karakter utama. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menganalisis bagaimana sistem dan proses tersebut diwakili dalam kaitannya dengan perkembangan Charlie, dengan mengacu pada teori Urie Bronfenbrenner dan konsep Proses Proksimal. Proyek akhir ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan data utama diambil dari novel Stephen Chbosky, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa lingkungan sosial sekitar, termasuk mikrosistem (keluarga dan teman sebaya), mesosistem (interaksi antara keluarga dan teman sebaya), eksosistem (kondisi mental anggota keluarga), makrosistem (nilai dan norma budaya), dan kronosistem (pengalaman masa lalu karakter), mempengaruhi perkembangan Charlie. Proses proksimal tercermin dalam karakteristik pribadi Charlie, seperti rasa ingin tahu namun cenderung menarik diri akibat pola pengasuhan, dan kemudian terbentuk oleh hubungan teman sebaya yang mendukung yang mendorong eksplorasi sosial, termasuk merokok dan interaksi romantis. Kontekstual dapat diamati melalui peran keluarga, sekolah, lingkungan sekitar, dan pengaruh sosial yang lebih luas yang memengaruhi kesejahteraan emosional dan pertumbuhan Charlie. Waktu, sebagai faktor perkembangan, ditunjukkan oleh dampak jangka panjang dari pelecehan masa lalu yang terus membentuk hubungan dan strategi penyembuhan Charlie.

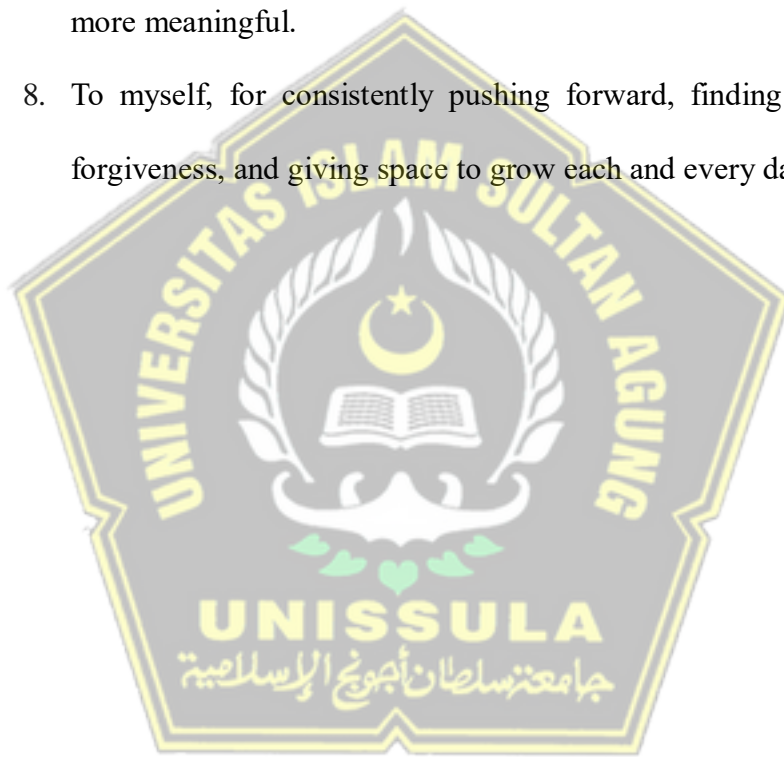
Kata Kunci: *bioekologi bronfenbrenner, mikrosistem, proses proksimal, perkembangan*

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I am aware that this final project is still far from perfect. Therefore, suggestions and constructive criticism are greatly needed. A space for discussion will always remain open for essential improvements.

Semarang, August 14th 2025


WIKI ARININGTI

Wika Ariningti



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Literature comes from the Latin word '*Literatura*' which means 'writing formed with letter'. Literature includes written works but is associated with something of artistic or intellectual value. Literature serves as a mirror of the human experience, exploring themes that range from love and loss to identity and conflict. Literature has been essential to cultural preservation, intellectual development, and creative expression for centuries (Hassan 1).

Literary works are seen as a reflection of human experience, which is able to examine into a person's emotions, desires, wishes, struggles (Hussain 1). In addition, literary works are also born as a representation of social conditions, phenomena, ideologies, thoughts or ideas processed through the author's imaginative creations. Wellek and Austin Warren state that literature presents a life that is largely made up of social reality which can be conclude that literary works are seen as a reflection of human experience and current social conditions in which humans interact and influence each other throughout one's life in society.

As a representation of human experience, literature encompasses various stages of life, from childhood to adolescence to adulthood. One of the stages of life in literature is Young Adult Literature (YAL), where both the terms "adolescent" and "literature" are dynamic because they constantly

evolve in response to cultural and societal changes as the context in which they emerge. In the late 1960s, YAL was used to refer to realistic fiction works that focused on contemporary real life, raising issues, topics, and situations relevant to readers aged around 12–18 years old.

Young Adult Literature (YAL) encompasses a variety of genres that are not only aimed at teenagers, but also appeal to a wider readership. This young age group is generally known as restless, curious, and adventurous, in line with the physical and psychological changes they experience during the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Saleh 1-4). Typically, the themes addressed are synonymous with the search for identity among teenagers in the mid-20th century, focusing on personal reflection and self-discovery regardless of gender (Weissman and Swanstrom 6-12). These themes then become the backdrop that drives the development of characters in the story.

Social interaction can be understood as a condition in which a person's behaviour is consciously adjusted by the influence of other people's behaviour, while at the same time influencing that person's behaviour in return (Hegtvedt and Turner 13-14). In his book *The Ecology of Human Development* and *Making Human Being Human*, Urie Bronfenbrenner explains that dynamic and reciprocal interactions create permanent changes in the way a person perceives and relates to their environment, where the individual and the environment continuously influence each other. This model is central to the proximal processes, which are the recurring,

progressively complex interactions between an individual and their immediate surroundings. These processes are shaped by the child's personal characteristics and the environmental context, both spatial (physical setting) and temporal (timing and historical context).

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory expands this idea by emphasizing that social interactions are not limited to the immediate environment (Microsystem) and the relationships between these environments (Mesosystem). Additionally, interactions are influenced by external environments where the individual does not directly participate (Exosystem) as well as broader cultural and societal values (macrosystem). Lastly, the theory considers the dimension of time (Chronosystem) which accounts for changes or continuities in the individual's life and environment over time (Hayes 7). Together, these systems create a complex framework that explains how proximal processes are embedded within and influenced by multiple layers of environmental and temporal contexts.

According to the definition stated above, literary works (such as novel, poem etc) implying the author's life experiences and social conditions, to the best of the writers' knowledge, is Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* where he based himself as a writer by including “countless details” of his time living in Pittsburgh, where the character Charlie experiences various environmental influences, ranging from interactions with his peers to the impact of childhood trauma where he was assaulted by his aunt at the age of seven which affected most of his

interactions with his environment. Charlie starts high school without any friends until he meets Patrick and Sam, two seniors who become his close friends. With them, Charlie enters the teenage world of sex, drugs, and abuse (Ackers 1). These friendship dynamics led him to a stressful life experience and re-lived his past traumas.

A previous study on the influence of the bioecological environment on character development was conducted by Qoirunnisa Dewi (2024), who analysed *The Cruel Prince* by Holly Black. By applying Bronfenbrenner's theory alongside Baltes' Life-Span Human Development framework, she found that Jude's transition from the human world to the faerie realm significantly impacted her physical, socio-emotional, and cognitive development. Her new environment shaped her identity, interpersonal relationships, and worldview, which continued to evolve throughout her life, aligning with the core principles of life-span development

As illustrated above, this research employs Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory, which identifies five layers of environmental systems—Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem, and Chronosystem – and analyses the proximal process concept in relation to human development. This study particularly focuses on the representation of Proximal Processes within the microsystem, emphasizing the ongoing and dynamic interactions between the main character and his immediate environment. Through this approach, a deeper understanding can be achieved regarding how sustained interactions within close relationships

shape individual development over time, while also acknowledging the influence of broader bioecological contexts and temporal factors.

The above statement is the reason the author chose the title "The Relationship Between Bioecological Systems and Development in the Novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999): Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological model as the research object. There are two main reasons why the author uses the novel as the research object. First, the author wants to analyse the various layers of bioecological systems that make up the main character's living environment. Second, the author wants to examine the representation of proximal process in one of the layers of the bioecological system, namely the microsystem.

B. Problem of Formulation

From the background of the analysis above, this research study will examine the following:

1. How is the bioecological system identified in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999)?
2. How is Bronfenbrenner's model of proximal process in relation to Charlie's development represented in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999)?

C. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study based in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* novel are:

1. To describe each layer of the bioecological system in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* novel
2. To analyse the representation of Bronfenbrenner's model of proximal process in relation to Charlie's development in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* novel

D. Limitation of the Study

This study only discusses on the microsystem layer of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological system in analysing the main character, Charlie, from the novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999). The analysis is limited to examining proximal processes, which—according to Bronfenbrenner—occur only within the microsystem. Other bioecological layers such as mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem are not analysed as sites of proximal processes, although they may be referenced as contextual influences.

E. Significance of the Study

This study has functions for readers which are:

1. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory through its application in literary analysis
2. This study can also provide readers insight into the perspective of Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory.

F. Organization of the Study

This research is systematically organized into five chapters to provide a comprehensive analysis. Chapter one introduces the study, presenting the research background that contextualizes Charlie's development within Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, along with the problem formulation, study limitations, research objectives, and significance. Chapter two conducts a literature review, including a synopsis of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and an examination of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model and related studies in developmental psychology. Chapter three outlines the research methodology, detailing the qualitative approach, data collection through close reading of the novel, and the analytical process using the PPCT framework. Chapter four presents the findings and discussion, analyzing Charlie's bioecological environment across micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems, as well as the proximal processes shaping his development. Finally, Chapter five concludes the study by summarizing key insights and offering suggestions for future research, such as integrating cultural psychology perspectives. This structured approach ensures a thorough investigation of Charlie's developmental trajectory through an ecological lens.

CHAPTER II

REVIEWS OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Synopsis of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999)

This novel tells the story of Charlie, who needs a friend to chat about everything. He wrote a letter and then sent it to "you" and hoped for a friend who could understand his situation and was willing to listen.

As the novel opens, Charlie is grappling with two major traumatic deaths of loved ones in his past. The most recent death occurred last spring when his only high school friend committed suicide. When Charlie was seven years old, his beloved Aunt Helen was killed in a car accident on Christmas Eve, which was also Charlie's birthday.

Charlie is nervous about entering high school, but he immediately finds acceptance from two major sources. First, his English teacher, Bill Anderson, recognized Charlie's talent for literature, and he mentored him, assigning him additional books to read and essays to write throughout the year. Additionally, Charlie begins to participate more in events, and he befriends Patrick and his step-sister, Sam, who integrate him into their group of friends. Charlie begins to like Sam, which he tells her about, and Sam treats him greatly.

As the school year progresses, Charlie begins to come out of his shell, but Charlie's life, his family's life, and the lives of his friends become increasingly complicated. The holidays are always a difficult time for Charlie's family, as they bring memories of Aunt Helen's death. This year is no exception. Although

Charlie finds solace in reading and rereading *The Catcher in the Rye*, he still struggles to overcome his depression and flashbacks to his time with Aunt Helen. However, Charlie's acceptance by his friends helps him become more at peace with himself.

Charlie became increasingly worried in his senior year because his senior friends were moving away to pursue higher education. Before Sam goes to a summer program, they have sexual physical contact which reminds him of the cause of his trauma. This reminded him of his aunt Helen who abused him as a child.

At the end of the story, he said that his parents found him naked on the living room sofa. They take him to a mental hospital, where Charlie finally realizes what Aunt Helen did to him because he suppressed this memory for a long time. Charlie decides to stop writing to participate more in his life.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower (1999) talks about Charlie's development through multiple layers of environment and the ongoing interactions within them. His journey shows the important role of immediate environments (such as family, friends, and school) as well as reciprocal interactions in shaping his development. His responses to trauma, relationships with friends, and self-reflection are aligned with Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory and the Proximal Process framework (PPCT: Person, Process, Context, and Time).

B. Theoretical Framework

B.1. Bioecological Theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner

Bronfenbrenner offers a new theoretical perspective for research in human development, conceptualizing the developing person, the environment, and especially the ever-evolving interaction between them. Human development is the product of the interaction between a growing human organism and its environment is to state what has become almost commonplace in the behavioural sciences. Development is defined as a permanent change in the way a person perceives and interacts with his or her environment.

The bioecology of human development is the study of the progressive mutual adjustment over the life course between an active, growing human being and the changing characteristics of the environments in which the developing person lives, as this process is influenced by the relationships among those environments and by the larger context in which those environments are situated (as cited in (Hayes 8).

B.1.1 The Bioecological Model of Human Development

The Bioecological environment is seen as a set of nested structures, one within the other, like a set of Russian dolls (matryoshka dolls) (Bronfenbrenner 3).

In his theory, Bronfenbrenner places the developing individual within an environmental order consisting of four main systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem.

These four systems are organised hierarchically based on their degree of proximity to the individual, starting from the most directly influencing environment (proximal) to the most indirectly influencing (distal). Along with a growing understanding of the importance of the temporal dimension in human development, Bronfenbrenner later added a fifth system called the chronosystem, which represents the influence of time and historical change on an individual's life.

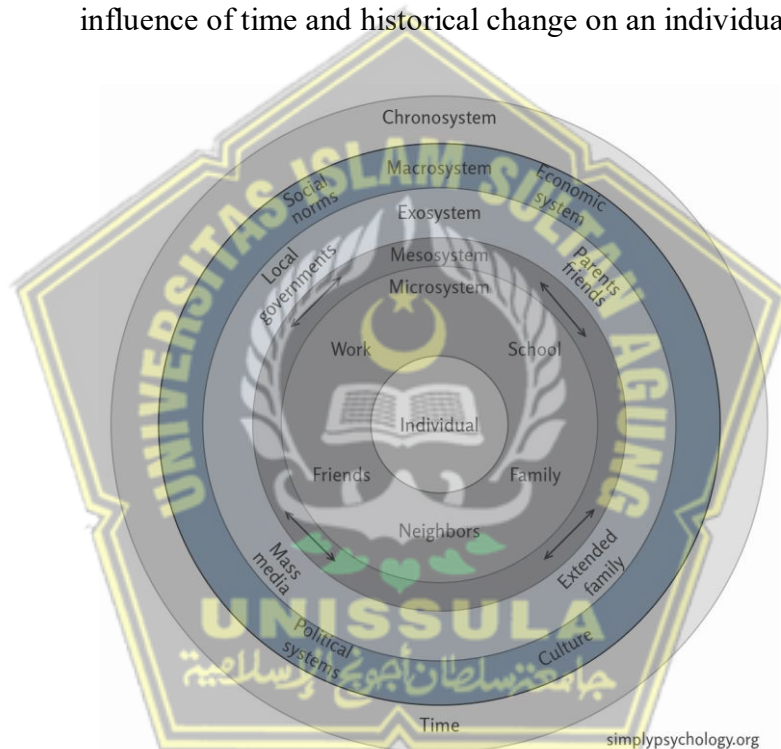


Figure 1 *The Five Stages of the Bioecological Model of Human Development.*

(Adapted from Bronfenbrenner, as cited in SimplyPsychology, 2024).

B.1.1.1 Microsystem

Microsystems are patterns of activities, roles and interpersonal relationships experienced by a developing person in

a specific environment with specific physical and material characteristics (Bronfenbrenner xvii). For example, the absence of the father contributes to low achievement motivation, inability to delay immediate gratification for later gratification, low self-esteem, susceptibility to peer group influence, and juvenile delinquency. Children in particular spend significant time in joint activities with adults or peers and see them as models, friends, and behavioural guides, which can inspire the child to undertake similar actions in his/her way (Bronfenbrenner 202-203).

B.1.1.2 Mesosystem

A mesosystem is defined as a set of relationships between two or more environments in which the developing individual is an active participant, such as the relationships between school, home, neighbours and peers. Mesosystems are microsystems that are formed or expanded when a developing individual moves into a new environment. For example, getting a first job where this transition has a developmental effect that involves a person in new activities and types of social structures (Bronfenbrenner 46).

Dual transition, in Mesosystem, permits the formation of a three-person system immediately upon entry into the new setting, with all its potential for second-order effects; the third party can serve as a source of security, provide a model of social interaction,

reinforce the developing person's initiative, and so on (Bronfenbrenner 211).

B.1.1.3 Exosystem

Exosystem includes external environments and institutions that do not directly involve the individual, but still have a significant impact on his or her development. Influences from the Exosystem are usually not directly visible, but have far-reaching effects. This system influences an individual's experiences, opportunities, and challenges through interactions with the surrounding environment, including the Microsystem (NeuroLaunch). For example, the dangers of television viewing can “freeze” speech and action, and turn active individuals into silent statues for as long as its enchanting influence lasts, like the magic of a wizard. The main danger of the television screen lies not only in the behaviours it produces, but also in the behaviours it prevents—such as the conversations, games, family celebrations, and arguments from which children learn and form their characteristics (Bronfenbrenner 242).

B.1.1.4 Macrosystem

This system covers things going on at a bigger societal level and how these influence the other systems around the child (Eileen 1). It revolves around the patterns of beliefs and

behaviours brought about through socialization by the various institutions of the culture, namely family, school, church, workplace and structures of government. The definition of macrosystem is sharing the kinds of characteristics specified in the above formal definition. As a result, the everyday experiences of children from a given socioeconomic, ethnic, or religious group tend to be similar (Bronfenbrenner 150). For example, Beliefs about gender roles impact on how children are raised and the expectations placed on them within the family, school and society (Evans 4).

B.1.1.5 Chronosystem

The chronosystem refers to changes over time within bioecological systems or individuals, creating new circumstances that influence development (Berns 32). Adjustment to traumatic life events is expressed through proximal processes or ongoing interaction with one's environment. For example, Mass trauma can change environments such as schools, jobs, and communities, affecting individuals and families in the long term. Internal processes such as physical, emotional, and cognitive responses to trauma interact with external factors (Hoffman and Kruczek 7).

Bronfenbrenner (10-11) concludes that the Bioecological environment includes not only the immediate situations that affect the developing individual, but also factors beyond direct interaction with

those around him or her. According to him, each type of environment shapes different patterns of roles, activities and relationships for individuals within it. These interactions involve not only environmental influences but also psychological experiences - for example, what is felt, wanted, feared or thought. As the frequency and depth of a person's exposure and interaction with their environment increases, these experiences can change (Bronfenbrenner 23).

Bronfenbrenner emphasises that human development involves both continuity and change. There is a progressive transformation in an individual's characteristics over time and space, reflecting continuity within the individual as well as within his or her environment. These changes occur as a result of the dynamic relationship between the individual, the environment, and others in the environment, who engage in reciprocal activities that gradually become increasingly complex and take place over a consistent period of time (Rosa and Tudge 7).

B.2. Uri Bronfenbrenner's Proximal Process

Bronfenbrenner and Morris state that throughout the course of life, humans develop through an increasingly complex process of reciprocal interactions between an active and evolving biopsychological human organism (the child) and the persons, objects and symbols in the immediate external environment. To be effective, these interactions must occur regularly and take place over a long

period of time. These interactions are referred to as Proximal Process (Hayes 9).

This concept forms the core mechanism of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, emphasizing that development is not simply a result of genetic or environmental factors alone, but of consistent, meaningful interactions over time.

B.2.1. Proximal Process

Proximal Processes are ongoing, regular interactions within the environment, such as parent-child relationships, peer interactions, play, and education, that drive development. These interactions connect individuals to their bioecological systems, where each system shapes behaviour. Through sustained engagement in social activities, individuals not only develop but also construct an understanding of their surroundings. Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) highlight that these enduring interactions form the foundation for growth and adaptation, emphasizing their essential role in long-term developmental outcomes (Hoffman and Kruczek 7).

Bronfenbrenner emphasized that proximal processes—progressively complex and reciprocal interactions—can only function effectively within primary settings such as family, child-care arrangements, schools, peer groups, and neighbourhoods. These microsystemic environments serve as the foundation where competence and character are formed. However, the increasing

busyness, instability, and chaos in such environments threaten the occurrence and continuity of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner xvii).

Additionally, as Bronfenbrenner refined the bioecological model, he stressed the importance of psychological characteristics of all persons within the microsystem. Defined as a pattern of face-to-face interpersonal relations shaped by temperament, personality, and belief systems, the microsystem remains the only bioecological layer where proximal processes can occur with full developmental effect. Interactions in more distant systems, while influential, do not fulfil the criteria for initiating proximal processes due to their lack of direct engagement and continuity (Rosa and Tudge 11).

Their influence can vary depending on three things: the characteristics of the individual (P), the immediate and distant environment (C), and the time dimension (T) in which the process takes place. To represent the interconnectedness of these three elements, Bronfenbrenner developed a framework known as the PPCT model. Through these proximal processes, a person's genetic potential can be seen through their behaviour and actions in everyday life (Hayes 9).

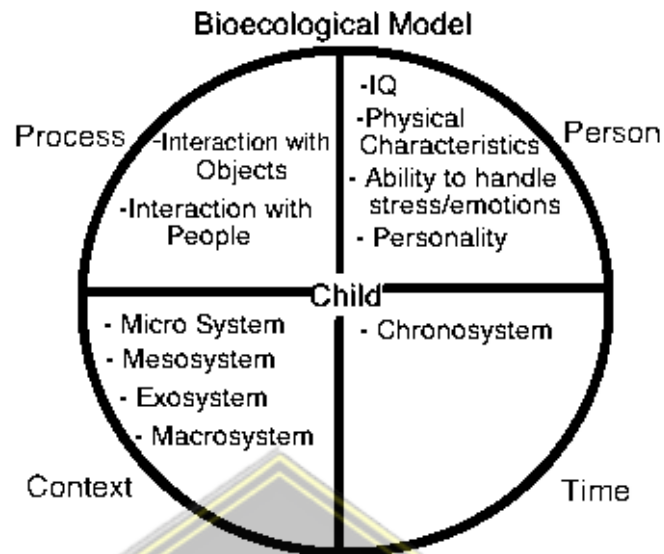


Figure 2 Urie Bronfenbrenner's PPCT (Process, Person, Context, and Time)

B.2.1.1 Process

Proximal processes involve a unified and dynamic relationship between the individual and the context (Bronfenbrenner xv). According to Bronfenbrenner, engaging in activities and interactions helps individuals make sense of their world (cited in (Hayes 22). For these interactions to be effective, they must occur regularly and last for extended periods. While proximal processes are generally characterized as having a positive impact on development, under certain circumstances, they may also have a negative effect.

B.2.1.2. Person

Person, with various biological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural characteristics, interacts with their environment

(Bronfenbrenner, xv). These characteristics — including active behavioural dispositions, either generative (such as curiosity, attentiveness, and the ability to defer gratification) or disruptive (such as distractibility, aggressive tendencies, and the inability to defer gratification, as well as a general tendency to avoid or withdraw from activity) — along with resources (such as abilities, skills, and experience, but also including limiting conditions such as genetic disabilities, chronic diseases, low birth weight, or impaired brain function) and demands (such as temperament, physical attractiveness, age, gender, and skin colour), can either enhance or inhibit growth and development (Hayes 23).

B.2.1.3. Context

Context conceptualized as the nested levels, or systems, of the ecology of human development (cited in (Bronfenbrenner 7). Contextual influences on children include proximal factors such as family, school and neighbourhood, as well as broader influences such as socio-cultural values and policies. While the immediate environment is the main focus of influence, other levels also play an important role in children's wellbeing and learning (Hayes 25).

B.2.1.4. Time

Time is conceptualized as involving multiple dimensions, such as individual developmental time, family time, and historical

time, all of which influence a person's growth (as cited in (Bronfenbrenner xv). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) further define time in three forms: microtime, referring to the continuity or disruption of proximal processes during an activity; mesotime, which focuses on the regularity of these interactions over days or weeks; and macrotime, which captures the impact of sociohistorical changes on development. These dimensions show that proximal processes are dynamic, evolving over time and influenced by both personal experiences and broader historical contexts (Rosa and Tudge 15). For example, the impact of an event may differ for a toddler compared to an adolescent (Hayes 25-26).

Human development involves a progressive and mutually beneficial mutual accommodation between the active and growing human being and the changing nature of the environment in which the developing person lives as this process is influenced by the relationship between that environment, as well as the larger context in which it exists.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the research method used in this study which consists of several subjects: Type of Research, Data Organizing, and Data Analysis.

A. Types of the Research

The type of research used in this study is a qualitative research method which is a subjective and systematic approach to explain and convey the meaning of life experiences. Qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups give to social or humanitarian issues (Creswell 4). In other words, qualitative research is used to analyse non-numerical data such as audio, video, and text to gain a deeper understanding of social problems and human behaviour (Farha 18). This form of research involves descriptive data that describes the statements or phenomena observed. In this study, the author uses qualitative research methods to analyse Charlie's environment and its' influences in relation to his development in the novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

B. Data Organizing

The data collecting method and types of data are two methods used in this research to organize the data.

B.1. Data Collecting Method

B.1.1 Reading the Novel

The first step the writer took was to read the research topic multiple times to identify the storyline. During the first reading, the

writer employed the skimming technique to get the general idea of the subject of the study, such as the theme, the plot, the main character, and the conflict. Next, the writer used scanning techniques, which involved looking for particular bits of information one was searching for (Aritonang et al. 103), to extract specific information from the text and to evaluate the subject's perspective through the lens of the applied theory.

B.1.2. Identifying the Data

After reading *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, the next step was to identify data that were relevant to Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological System theory. This process involved highlighting and underlining sentences that supported the analysis based on the theory.

Appendix 1 Table of Classified Data

No	Quote	Page	Type of analysis	Types of Data	Reference	Comment

B.1.3. Classifying the Data

The third step was data classification. After all relevant data had been collected, the writer organized and identified the findings using an appendix in the form of a table. This table consisted of several columns: quotation, page number, form of data, type of relevance to the problem formulation, theoretical reference, and analytical

comment. The table functioned as a tool to systematically address the research questions formulated in this study.

B.1.4. Reducing the Data

The final step of the data collection process was data reduction. This process aimed to eliminate information that was not relevant to the research objectives. As a result, the data used for analysis became more focused and appropriate, thereby enabling the writer to effectively address the questions outlined in the research problem formulation.

B.2. Types of the Data

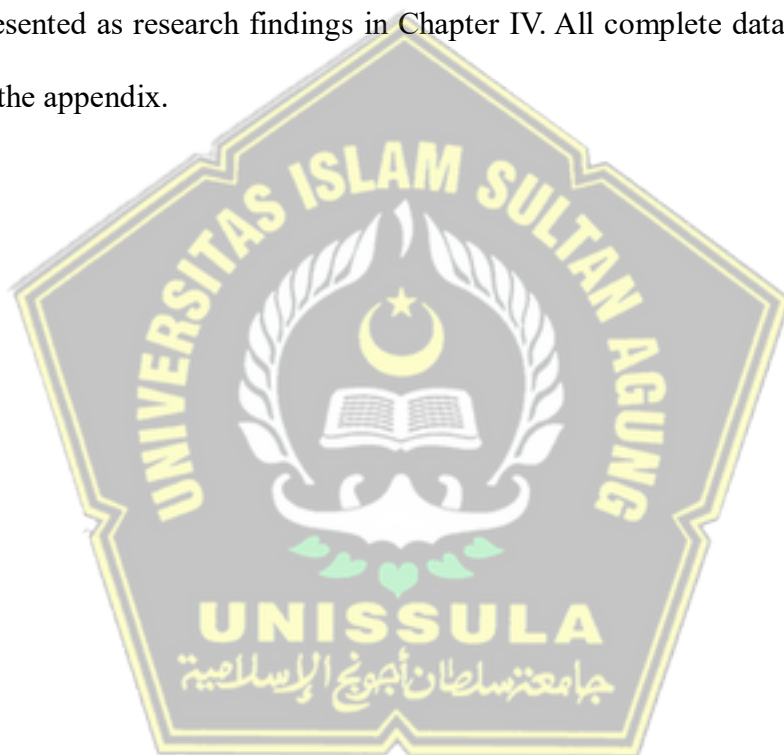
The types of data used in this study were divided into two categories: primary data and secondary data. Primary data referred to the first-hand data gathered by the researcher him/herself (Oluwatosin 2). In this research, the primary data were obtained by the writer from the main object of study, namely the novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

Secondary data, on the other hand, referred to data collected by someone else earlier, which could include websites, books, journal articles, and similar sources (Oluwatosin 2). In this study, secondary data consisted of scholarly journals, reference books, and articles that were relevant to the analysis of the primary data.

C. Analysing the Data

The final step of the data analysis technique involves analysing and reporting the collected data using qualitative research with qualitative data in

the form of description and identification of the text, such as narrations, dialogues, and monologues that is obtained from *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* novel. The purpose of using descriptive analysis is to explain, evaluate, and understand the data from the subject, which is then supported by secondary data such as journals, articles, and books that discuss Urie Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory. The results of the overall analysis are presented as research findings in Chapter IV. All complete data are presented in the appendix.



CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter addresses the problem formulations to complete the overall discussion of the study. There are two main issues explored: identifying Charlie's bioecological environment and analysing the proximal processes that influence the main character's development in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) novel. The findings and discussion incorporate quotations from various sources such as articles, journals, and books related to the bioecological theory of human development. These references are used to support the analysis and provide evidence for the study. Furthermore, the discussion explains how these references relate to specific parts of the novel to help build a deeper understanding and reach meaningful conclusions.

A. The Bioecological Environment of Charlie

The first section will discuss the first problem formulation regarding bioecological environment as portrayed in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) based on bioecological theory by Uri Bronfenbrenner to identify the changing characteristics of the environment in with the developing person lives as this develop process is influenced by environments and by the larger context in which those environments are situated (cited in (Hayes 8). Bronfenbrenner divided the environment into five layers of bioecological system, they are microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

A.1. Microsystem

Microsystems are patterns of activities, roles and interpersonal relationships experienced by a developing person in a specific environment with specific physical and material characteristics (Bronfenbrenner xvii). Children in particular spend significant time in joint activities with adults or peers and see them as models, friends, and behavioural guides, which can inspire the child to undertake similar actions in his/her way (Bronfenbrenner 202-203). Based on Bronfenbrenner's theory, microsystem or the immediate environment in the following quote:

“My Aunt Helen lived with the family for the last few years of her life because something very bad happened to her. Nobody would tell me what happened then even though I always wanted to know. When I was around seven, I stopped asking about it because I kept asking like kids always do and my Aunt Helen started crying very hard.

“That's when my dad slapped me, saying, “You're hurting your aunt Helen's feelings!” I didn't want to do that, so I stopped. Aunt Helen told my father not to hit me in front of her ever again and my father said this was his house and he would do what he wanted and my mom was quiet and so were my brother and sister (Datum Number 1).”

The quote illustrates Charlie's interactions and his microsystem, showing how family roles and power dynamics condition developmental pathways through

direct reinforcement of behaviour. Charlie's natural curiosity intersects with authoritarian parenting to produce learned avoidance behaviour (as a developmental outcome), all occurring strictly within the face-to-face relationships that make up Bronfenbrenner's (2005) microsystem.

Charlie's school microsystem supports his growth through two-way interactions that help make up for limits in his family. Where his home environment reinforces inhibition (see Datum 1), the school microsystem - particularly through peer relationships like Patrick's - provides alternative proximal processes characterized by positive reciprocity. This exemplifies Bronfenbrenner's (2005) contention that microsystems constitute 'the engine of development' through face-to-face interactions that directly shape competence acquisition.

“Now, normally I am very shy, but Nothing seemed like the kind of guy you could just walk up to at a football game even though you were three years younger and not popular.

“Hey, you're in my shop class!” He's a very friendly person.”

Despite being younger and unpopular, Patrick greets him in a friendly manner.

“The nice thing about the Big Boy was the fact that Patrick and Sam didn't just throw around inside jokes and make me struggle to keep up. Not at all. They asked me questions.

...

This made them laugh because they knew I meant it honest, not show-off. Then they told me their favourites, and we sat quiet. I ate the pumpkin pie because the lady said it was in season, and Patrick and Sam smoked more cigarettes (Datum Number 2).”

This initial encounter with Patrick and Sam establishes the foundation for a microsystem relationship, characterized by consistent, positive interactions that foster Charlie’s social integration. Their behaviour (actively engaging Charlie in conversation and responding to his authenticity with acceptance) creates a supportive environment where he feels valued. These repeated, face-to-face interactions form part of Charlie’s microsystem, as they involve direct relationships and shared activities in a stable setting. According to Bronfenbrenner (202-203), development is not only shaped by the activities and roles within a setting but also by how the developing person perceives these experiences. In this context, Patrick and Sam act as models, companions, and behavioural guides, encouraging Charlie to gradually engage in similar social behaviours in his own way.

A.2. Mesosystem

A mesosystem is defined as a set of relationships between two or more environments in which the developing individual is an active participant, such as the relationships between school, home, neighbours and peers. Mesosystems are microsystems that are formed or expanded when a developing individual moves into a new environment.

Dual transition, in Mesosystem, permits the formation of a three-person system immediately upon entry into the new setting, with all its potential for second-order effects; the third party can serve as a source of security, provide a model of social interaction, reinforce the developing person's initiative, and so on (Bronfenbrenner 211).

Charlie's mesosystem consists of the interrelation between his family and peer groups. Entering a new social environment brings in third-party figures—his friends—as alternative sources of security, offering models of interaction and encouraging Charlie's initiative in building connections. This shift reflects a second-order effect during a dual transition, where changes in one setting influence development across another.

"I don't know if you've ever felt like that. That you wanted to sleep for a thousand years. Or just not exist. Or just not be aware that you do exist. Or something like that. I think wanting that is very morbid, but I want it when I get like this. That's why I'm trying not to think. I just want it all to stop spinning. If this gets any worse, I might have to go back to the doctor. It's getting that bad again.

-

"Can I have a cigarette?"

The quote illustrates Charlie's emotional distress, which is influenced by his immediate environment. Unable to process his sadness within his family, Charlie turns to his friends, Patrick and Sam, whom in Bronfenbrenner's theory, such third-party figures in the microsystem can serve as a source of security. The adolescent

culture surrounding Charlie, including his older brother who introduced him to underage drinking, as well as senior friends like Patrick and Sam whose social circle engages in smoking, drinking, and drug use, reinforces his coping behaviours. At this time, Charlie asked for a cigarette as a way to ease his emotional pain.

“Sam put her arm around my shoulder, and she said she knew what I was going through. She told me I shouldn’t worry about it. Once you do it, you remember how things looked on it. That’s all. Like how the road turned into waves. And how your face was plastic and your eyes were two different sizes. It’s all in your mind.

That’s when she gave me the cigarette (Datum Number 3).”

Sam shows empathy and reassures Charlie by telling him that it is all in his mind, then offers him a cigarette to help him feel better. This moment reflects how peers, as third-party figures, can offer a sense of security, provide models of social interaction, and reinforce the developing person’s initiative during Charlie’s dual transition within his mesosystem.

A.3. Exosystem

Exosystem includes external environments and institutions that do not directly involve the individual, but still have a significant impact on his or her development. Influences from the Exosystem are usually not directly visible, but have far-reaching effects. This system influences an individual's experiences, opportunities, and challenges through interactions with the surrounding environment, including the Microsystem (NeuroLaunch 1).

“I will not say who. I will not say when. I will just say that my aunt Helen was molested. I hate that word. It was done by someone who was very close to her. It was not her dad. She finally told her dad. He didn’t believe her because of who it was. A friend of the family. That just made it worse. My grandma never said anything either. And the man kept coming over for visits.”

Aunt Helen's traumatic experience, where she was abused by a family friend but was disbelieved by her parents, and the abuser was allowed to visit, reflects the dynamics of the ecosystem in Charlie's life. Although Charlie was not directly involved, this environment still had a significant impact on his emotional growth and development.

“My aunt Helen drank a lot. My aunt Helen took drugs a lot. My aunt Helen had many problems with men and boys. She was a very unhappy person most of her life. She went to hospitals all the time. All kinds of hospitals. Finally, she went to a hospital that helped her figure things out enough to try and make things normal, so she moved in with my family (Datum Number 4).”

Aunt Helen’s past experiences led to alcohol and drug addiction and relationship problems, which left her feeling very unhappy. After receiving medical treatment, she moved into Charlie's house. However, it was later discovered that during her stay, she had molested Charlie, resulting difficulties in emotional management and intimacy. This incident demonstrates how unresolved trauma

from a family member, such as an aunt, who also serves as a companion at home, can adversely affect a child's experience in the closest environment.

A.4. Macrosystem

This system covers things going on at a bigger societal level and how these influence the other systems around the child (Eileen 1). It revolves around the patterns of beliefs and behaviours brought about through socialization by the various institutions of the culture, namely family, school, church, workplace and structures of government. The definition of macrosystem is sharing the kinds of characteristics specified in the above formal definition. As a result, the everyday experiences of children from a given socioeconomic, ethnic, or religious group tend to be similar (Bronfenbrenner 150).

Charlie's macrosystem includes beliefs and behaviours that exist in his immediate environment.

"I just need to know that someone out there listens and understands and doesn't try to sleep with people even if they could have. I need to know that these people exist."

...

We met Patrick outside because they didn't like to go to class sometimes. They preferred to smoke.

...

The party was in the basement of this house. The room was quite smoky, and the kids were much older."

The quote above shows that the patterns of behaviour such as smoking, taking drugs, partying and casual sex that appear repeatedly in the quote indicate the dominant cultural values around Charlie. As someone who is just entering the more complex world of adolescence, Charlie is still trying to understand that not all people or situations reflect such lifestyles - even though the wider culture in its macrosystem tends to normalise such behaviours.

“Sex things are weird, too. It’s like after that first night, we have this pattern where we basically do what we did that first time, but there is no fire or Billie Holiday record because we are in a car, and everything is rushed. Maybe this is the way things are supposed to be, but it doesn’t feel right (Datum Number 5).”

However, the longer Charlie was in the environment, the more he began to accept what he saw and heard as normal and should happen in his environment. Although he was not entirely comfortable at first, he slowly internalised the values and behaviours around him. This shows that the macrosystem influences children's belief and behaviour patterns which are shaped by the main social institutions (family, school, culture, etc).

A.5. Chronosystem

The chronosystem refers to changes over time within ecological systems or individuals, creating new circumstances that influence development (Berns 32). Adjustment to traumatic life events is expressed through proximal processes or ongoing interaction with one’s environment (Hoffman and Kruczek 7).

“I’m really glad that Christmas and my birthday are soon because that means they will be over soon because I can already feel myself going to a bad place I used to go. After my Aunt Helen was gone, I went to that place.

...

Despite everything my mom and doctor and dad have said to me about blame, I can’t stop thinking what I know. And I know that my aunt Helen would still be alive today if she just bought me one present like everybody else. She would be alive if I were born on a day that didn’t snow. I would do anything to make this go away.”

The above quote illustrates the ongoing adjustment process in Charlie’s psychological development following the traumatic event. His parents and doctor serve not only as behavioural guides but also as emotional companions, consistently reminding him that he is not to blame for Aunt Helen’s death. These repeated and meaningful interactions exemplify Bronfenbrenner’s concept of proximal processes, through which Charlie gradually internalises the emotional support and begins to reframe his sense of guilt. The development is influenced both by internal factors, such as Charlie’s persistent self-blame, and by external conditions—namely, the presence of nurturing figures—that together foster a gradual sense of growth.

“And after a while, I realized that it happened every Saturday when we would watch television.

...

The hardest part was sitting in the doctor's office when the doctor told my mom and dad what had happened. I have never seen my mother cry so much. Or my father look so angry. Because they didn't know it was happening when it was (Datum Number 6).”

This quote shows that in addition to the process of internal reflection on what Aunt Helen did and its impact on his daily life, Charlie also undergoes important changes through the help of an external party, the doctor. This intervention not only changed his perception of Aunt Helen, but also triggered an emotional reaction from his parents, who were previously unaware of the incident. This change in perception reflects how the chronosystem works - that is, changes over time in the individual and the surrounding systems that create new conditions for development (Berns 32).

This shows that Charlie's surroundings are not only important as the setting in which he grows up, but also influence the way he thinks, feels and behaves. Every part of his environment-family, friends, even time-played a role in shaping Charlie's life and development. This indicates that the five systems in Bronfenbrenner's theory work together and change with Charlie's life experiences.

B. The Concept of Proximal Processes in Relation to Charlie's Development

B.1. Person

Person, with various biological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural characteristics, interacts with their environment (Bronfenbrenner, xv). These characteristics — including active behavioural dispositions, either generative (such as curiosity, attentiveness, and the ability to defer gratification) or disruptive (such

as distractibility, aggressive tendencies, and the inability to defer gratification, as well as a general tendency to avoid or withdraw from activity) — along with resources (such as abilities, skills, and experience, but also including limiting conditions such as genetic disabilities, chronic diseases, low birth weight, or impaired brain function) and demands (such as temperament, physical attractiveness, age, gender, and skin colour), can either enhance or inhibit growth and development (Hayes 23).

Charlie exhibits Person characteristics that reflect a generative disposition, such as curiosity and a tendency to shift his focus away from painful thoughts toward more constructive activities.

“I started reading my mom’s copy from the place I left off with Bill’s copy. And it made me not think about my birthday. All I thought was that I am going to take my driver’s test sometime soon enough. That was a pretty good thing to think about. And then I thought about my driver’s education class this past semester.”

As a way of coping, Charlie tries not to dwell on his sadness. From the beginning of writing his diary, he shows an attentive attitude, which in theory is referred to as a generative disposition—the ability to regulate emotions and stay engaged with the environment. This is reflected in his habits of writing, reading, or intentionally redirecting his attention by recalling other things, so his mind doesn’t stay focused on sorrow.

“I don’t know if you’ve ever felt like that. That you wanted to sleep for a thousand years. Or just not exist. Or just not be aware that you

do exist. Or something like that. I think wanting that is very morbid, but I want it when I get like this. That's why I'm trying not to think. I just want it all to stop spinning. If this gets any worse, I might have to go back to the doctor. It's getting that bad again."

Charlie's resource characteristics are reflected in his ability to regulate distressing thoughts—for example, by trying not to dwell on them—and his willingness to accept help from others when he feels overwhelmed.

"Now, normally I am very shy, but Nothing seemed like the kind of guy you could just walk up to at a football game even though you were three years younger and not popular.

"I'm Charlie." I said, not too shy (17).

The nice thing about the Big Boy was the fact that Patrick and Sam didn't just throw around inside jokes and make me struggle to keep up. Not at all. They asked me questions.

....

This made them laugh because they knew I meant it honest, not show-off. Then they told me their favourites, and we sat quiet (Datum Number 7)."

Charlie's demand characteristics include being younger and socially unrecognized (unpopular), and shy. However, he still takes the initiative to introduce himself to Patrick, who responds positively, leading to a meaningful and supportive interaction. This illustrates how Charlie's Person characteristics, such as emotional sensitivity and introspection which contribute to growth and

development by enabling the formation of positive proximal processes. These traits allow him to engage meaningfully with emotionally supportive figures, facilitating psychological adjustment over time.

B.2. Process

Proximal processes involve a unified and dynamic relationship between the individual and the context (Bronfenbrenner xv). According to Bronfenbrenner, engaging in activities and interactions helps individuals make sense of their world (in (Hayes 22). For these interactions to be effective, they must occur regularly and last for extended periods. While proximal processes are generally characterized as having a positive impact on development, under certain circumstances, they may also have a negative effect.

“I didn’t know that other people thought things about me. I didn’t know that they looked. I was sitting on the floor of a basement of my first real party between Sam and Patrick, and I remembered that Sam introduced me as her friend to Bob.”

-

“Bob raised his drink and asked everyone to do the same.

“To Charlie.”

And the whole group said, “To Charlie.”

The recurring interaction between Charlie and his peers illustrates an effective and positive proximal process. Their relationship develops through consistent social engagement—beginning with their meeting at Big Boy, followed by an invitation to a house party where Charlie is introduced to others. In this

setting, Charlie experiences a sense of social presence, feeling seen and accepted. These sustained and meaningful interactions within his microsystem have a positive impact on his social development.

“Sam put her arm around my shoulder, and she said she knew what I was going through. She told me I shouldn’t worry about it. Once you do it, you remember how things looked on it. That’s all. Like how the road turned into waves. And how your face was plastic and your eyes were two different sizes. It’s all in your mind.”

The emotional closeness with Sam is seen when he hugs Charlie and tries to calm his anxiety due to his frantic feelings, bad day, and the effects of the drugs he consumed. In addition to friends, Charlie's parents are also present to calm and understand Charlie's condition.

“Despite everything my mom and doctor and dad have said to me about blame, I can’t stop thinking what I know.

....

Maybe it’s good to put things in perspective, but sometimes, I think that the only perspective is to really be there. Like Sam said. Because it’s okay to feel things. And be who you are about them (Datum Number 8).”

The above interaction shows that Charlie learns from his immediate environment which provides emotional acceptance and validation of his feelings. This support helps Charlie shape his self-perception and encourages acceptance of his own emotions. The interaction reflects a proximal process that has a positive

impact on his psychological development because it takes place in a meaningful way, occurs regularly, and is consistent over a long period of time as required by the theory to be effective in supporting individual development.

In some situations, the process also had a negative impact on Charlie's development.

“Thank God we heard the automatic garage door opener when we did.

.....

So, he said “thanks” and hugged me again. And moved in to kiss me again. And I just let him. I don’t know why.

.....

It was like everything made sense. Until she moved her hand under my pants, and she touched me.

That’s when I stopped her.”

This quote illustrates how proximal processes, although important in development, do not always result in positive outcomes. Charlie's regular social and physical encounters unresolved trauma where they result in emotional confusion rather than growth. Charlie's passivity and distress suggest that it is the quality of interactions, not just their frequency, that determines developmental impact.

“When I fell asleep, I had this dream. My brother and my sister and I were watching television with my Aunt Helen. Everything was in slow motion. The sound was thick. And she was doing what Sam was doing.

.....

I don't know what's wrong with me. It's like all I can do is keep writing this gibberish to keep from breaking apart.

.....

Because I'm starting to feel like what I dreamt about her last night was true. And my psychiatrist's questions weren't weird after all (Datum Number 9).”

Charlie's regular interactions with his immediate environment provide insight into his passive responses in an intimate context. The above quote, which describes the prolonged interactions in Charlie's life, resonates with Bronfenbrenner's assertion that the process, while effective in shaping development, can also produce negative impacts under certain conditions. In Charlie's case, these ongoing interactions initially caused confusion and distress, but they remained effective over time as he continued to engage with his environment. Therefore, it can be concluded that these interactions - although initially unpleasant (negative) - ultimately contributed to his psychological development.

B.3. Context

Bronfenbrenner (cited in (xv)) conceptualised human development as shaped by a multi-level environmental system. Children are influenced by immediate contexts like family, school, and neighbourhood, as well as broader factors such as socio-cultural values and policies. While the immediate environment is central, other systems also impact their wellbeing and learning.

“One thing I do know is that it makes me wonder if I have “problems at home” but it seems to me that a lot of other people have it a lot worse.

....

My dad said, “There are other people who have it a lot worse (Datum Number 10).”

Charlie learned to manage his emotions through the values instilled by his family. This understanding is then internalized by Charlie, especially when he feels not okay. This shows that family plays an important role in shaping a child's well-being and emotional learning process, especially in managing emotions.

“I keep quiet most of the time, and only one kid named Sean really seemed to notice me. He waited for me after gym class and said really immature things like how he was going to give me a “swirlie,” which is where someone sticks your head in the toilet and flushes to make your hair swirl around. He seemed pretty unhappy as well, and I told him so. Then, he got mad and started hitting me, and I just did the things my brother taught me to do. My brother is a very good fighter.

“Go for the knees, throat, and eyes.”

And I did (Datum Number 10).”

According to Bronfenbrenner, schools as part of the microsystem play an important role in shaping children's well-being and learning process. In this excerpt, Charlie is bullied even though he chooses to remain silent. When the situation

escalates, he defends himself in a way that his brother taught him. This shows that the school environment, as a place where children learn social and cultural values, contributes to children's emotional well-being and security.

“Then, we stick a candle in the sand of each bag, and when we light the candles, it turns the street into a “landing strip” for Santa Claus. I love putting luminaria up every year because it is very beautiful and a tradition and a good distraction from my birthday (Datum Number 10).”

In addition to family and school, the neighbourhood is also important for a child's wellbeing and learning. This environment can provide a sense of security and an escape from stress, especially when Charlie is feeling down, like on his birthday. He often takes a walk around the house to calm down. This shows that simple things done regularly, such as interacting with the environment, can help his emotional development.

“I think that if I ever have kids, and they are upset, I won't tell them that people are starving in China or anything like that because it wouldn't change the fact that they were upset. And even if somebody else has it much worse, that doesn't really change the fact that you have what you have. Good and bad. Just like what my sister said when I had been in the hospital for a while (Datum Number 10).”

Broader influences also shape children's wellbeing and learning. This quote reflects Charlie's shift away from the values of parenting and family that minimised

emotional expression by comparing himself to others. However, through interactions with an environment that offered empathy and support, Charlie began to understand that his feelings were legitimate. The sense of security he gained from these relationships helped him realise that emotions should not always be measured by the severity of other people's problems.

Family, school, neighbourhood and broader influences together shape Charlie's development. Through these contexts, he learns and absorbs social and cultural values that shape him as an evolving individual.

B.4. Time

Time is conceptualised as involving multiple dimensions such as individual development, family time, and historical time, all of which influence a person's growth (Elder, 1998, as cited in (Bronfenbrenner xv). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) define time in three forms: microtime, referring to the continuity or disruption of proximal processes during an activity; mesotime, which focuses on the regularity of these interactions over days or weeks; and macrotime, which captures the impact of sociohistorical changes on development. These dimensions show that proximal processes are dynamic, evolving over time and influenced by both personal experiences and broader historical contexts (Rosa and Tudge 15).

“I don’t know what’s wrong with me. It’s like all I can do is keep writing this gibberish to keep from breaking apart. Sam’s gone. And Patrick won’t be home for a few days. And I just couldn’t talk with Mary Elizabeth or anybody or my brother or anybody in my family. Except maybe my aunt Helen. But she’s gone.

...

I don't know what I'm supposed to do now. I know other people have it a lot worse. I do know that, but it's crashing in anyway.

...

I'm sorry, but I have to stop this letter now."

This passage reveals microtime as Charlie's continuous cognitive-emotional workflow during distress. His simultaneous efforts to both *maintain* writing ('keep writing this gibberish') and *regulate* overwhelming thoughts ('keep from breaking apart') exemplify Bronfenbrenner's microtime as the real-time unfolding of proximal processes (2005). Unlike one-time interruptions, this shows microtime's sustained nature - where thinking, writing, and emotional management co-occur in an immediate psychological present.

"I'm really glad that Christmas and my birthday are soon because that means they will be over soon because I can already feel myself going to a bad place I used to go. After my Aunt Helen was gone, I went to that place.

....

I probably shouldn't be writing about this too much because it brings it up too much. It makes me think too much. And I am trying to participate."

This excerpt demonstrates how mesotime and family time overlap in Charlie's development. The recurring emotional distress during family times of year – in a week of Christmas and his birthday. These recurring periods reflect

emotional patterns that disrupt his ability to stay engaged in present activities. Mesotime here shows how trauma resurfaces during significant family rituals, influencing his emotional regulation and participation in daily life.

“So, this is my life. And I want you to know that I am both happy and sad and I’m still trying to figure out how that could be.

....

My dad said, “There are other people who have it a lot worse.”

And my mom was quiet. And that was that (Datum Number 11).”

The macrotime in this excerpt is seen in the family values and norms that have been internalised and shape the way Charlie expresses his emotions. The simultaneous feelings of happiness and sadness show recurring emotional complexity, reflecting the long-term effects of parenting patterns that emphasise the suppression of emotions. This also aligns with the concept of historical time, as Charlie's emotional regulation is shaped by cultural and familial expectations that are passed down from generation to generation.

Time also helps reveal how Charlie internalizes the values and norms upheld by his family, which continue to influence his emotional responses and coping behaviours.

“I don’t really remember much of what happened after that except that my older brother came to Mr. Vaughn’s office in my middle school and told me to stop crying. Then, he put his arm on my shoulder and told me to get it out of my system before Dad came home.”

This interaction illustrates microtime as an individualised moment where Charlie's brother's request to “finish” his crying before his father comes home demonstrates the pressure to suppress emotions instantly, which may interfere with Charlie's ability to process his emotions continuously over time.

“My dad said, “There are other people who have it a lot worse.”

And my mom was quiet. And that was that. A month later, my sister met another boy and started playing happy records again.

....

“Is it your aunt Helen?”

....

“Please, don’t do this to yourself, Charlie.”

But I did do it to myself. Like I do every year on my birthday.

“I’m sorry.”

My mom wouldn’t let me talk about it.”

This annual pattern represents mesotime (the cycle of trauma) tied to family time (the collective role of father-mother-siblings in maintaining repression). Bronfenbrenner emphasises that Time is conceptualised as family time, which means that it is shaped by family rhythms - as seen in the “others have it worse” ritual that Charlie internalises every birthday.

“It’s like if I blamed my aunt Helen, I would have to blame her dad for hitting her and the friend of the family that fooled around with her when she was little. And the person that fooled around with him. And God for not stopping all this and things that are much worse.

And I did do that for a while, but then I just couldn't anymore.
Because it wasn't going anywhere. Because it wasn't the point
(Datum Number 12).”

Charlie's journey from blame to acceptance represents macrotime: changing understandings of trauma influenced by cultural norms (e.g. a shift from a culture of victim-blaming to a recovery approach). Meanwhile, his reference to violence across generations (aunt Helen → her father → family friend) confirms historical time as a developmental factor - where the legacy of past violence shapes Charlie's emotional responses in the present.

In the context of time analysis according to PPCT, the two data points above show three forms of time - microtime, mesotime and macrotime - that are dynamic in Charlie's life. His personal experience is constantly evolving and is also influenced by the wider social structure.

Through analysis of Charlie's experiences, the novel demonstrates how proximal processes within microsystems shape developmental outcomes. Charlie shows changes in the way he responds to trauma and grief, signalling active engagement in a complex developmental process.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter contains conclusions from the formulation of the problems discussed in chapter IV and also provides suggestions for further researchers and readers.

A. Conclusion

Based on the analysis in Chapter IV, the five layers of Charlie's bioecological environment are interconnected and influence one another, forming a nested system like a set of matryoshka dolls. At the microsystem level, Charlie directly interacts with his family and friends. The mesosystem includes the connection between his home environment and his friendships (particularly with Patrick and Sam) who help him cope with emotional distress during transitions between settings. The exosystem involves external factors such as the condition of his household and Aunt Helen's mental health, which indirectly shape Charlie's experiences and interactions within his immediate environment. Meanwhile, the macrosystem consists of broader societal norms around smoking, sex, and emotional expression that are internalized through his close surroundings and influence his worldview. Finally, cross-generational trauma and repetitive emotional patterns show how the chronosystem prolongs the impact of negative interactions.

Charlie's development takes shape through an evolving two-way relationship between himself and the environment in which he grows. This relationship is known as the proximal process in the Person-Process-Context-Time

(PPCT) framework. The process takes place within Charlie's immediate environment-such as family, friends, school, and neighbourhood which forms the basis of his developmental competencies.

The proximal process includes elements of Charlie's *Person* or personal character, such as his emotional sensitivity, his ability to regulate stressful thoughts and feelings, and his position as a younger and less popular person which enhances his development outcomes. The *Process* element encompasses both positive and negative interactions that occur regularly and over extended periods of time. Charlie experiences acceptance and validation of his emotions, which has a significant positive impact on his development. However, some interactions influenced by unresolved trauma actually cause confusion rather than personal growth, triggering passivity and negatively affecting development.

Context in family serves as a place where Charlie learns to manage his emotions based on the values upheld by his family. At school, he learns how to protect himself from bullying. His neighbourhood provides a space of calm where he can ease stress or emotional lows. Meanwhile, broader influences (such as the pressure to suppress emotions because others are perceived to have it worse) also stem from his family environment. This illustrates how context significantly shapes Charlie's emotional well-being and learning process. Meanwhile, Charlie's experience of *Time* works on three levels - Microtime, events such as his brother forcing him not to cry reinforce emotional suppression; Mesotime, recurring events such as his failed birthday trapped him in a cycle of trauma; and, Macrotime, family norms that require him to be silent and societal expectations of masculinity intensify

his emotional struggles. Time also manifests through the internalisation of values in different timeframes: Microtime - being told not to cry before his father arrives; Mesotime - emotional suppression rooted in family beliefs such as 'other people are worse'; and Macrotime - his refusal to blame others, while acknowledging that blame alone will not bring healing. Both of these timescales show how Charlie's personal experiences were profoundly shaped by broader social structures.

B. Suggestion

Using bioecological theory, this study analyses *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by highlighting the microsystems and proximal processes that shape Charlie's developmental trajectory through interactions with immediate environments such as family and friends. However, the researchers realised that individual development is also influenced by other interconnected systems. Given the complexity of Charlie's bioecological systems, future studies could expand this analysis by integrating other elements in bioecological theory such as the mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem-as well as considering alternative approaches such as Michael Cole's cultural psychology, which emphasises the active role of culture and symbolic tools such as language and social practices in shaping human development.

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