

Redefining PSE for Application to the Family Context: Family Rules, Family Relationships, the Home, and Values

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INTRODUCTION

The family remains an essential context for influencing behavior change and removing family and home from the assessment of behavior change leaves out the most essential context for sustained improvement.

Proposed is a framework for applying the concepts of policy, systems, and environmental change to the context of the family. Framework concepts include **family rules**, **family relationships**, and **the home**. The role of **values** held by family members is acknowledged and described. By targeting these aspects of family life in educational initiatives, practitioners and family life education professionals help families make lasting behavior changes for healthy living.

The purpose of this study is to understand how family rules, family relationships, the home, and the acknowledgement of values can be used to improve individual and community health initiatives and the need to incorporate family into the context of policy, systems, and environmental change efforts aimed at improving health.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Bronfenbrenner's conceptualizations (1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994) of bioecological models of development are

generally considered the modern foundational theories that describe the proximal and distal social-ecological forces influencing human development and behavior. Health promotion and public health professionals take as their theoretical branching-off point McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, and Glanz's (1988) ecological framework that emphasizes health, nutrition, and community-level interventions. Subsequent models have continued to focus on the broadest levels of that model, namely, the (1) social structure, policy, and systems, (2) community, and (3) institutional/organizational spheres of influence (e.g., Kegler et al., 2015).

These models provide researchers and practitioners a framework for conducting and evaluating community-level nutrition and health education initiatives (Gregson et al., 2001), thus leading to a consistent emphasis on PSE concepts. We question whether the concepts of policies, systems, and environmental change already exist in the family context. We then propose a vernacular for identifying and evaluating such concepts within family and consumer science education programs and initiatives (see Figure 1).

Policy and Family Rules

Policies refer to the rules, regulations, laws, and legal and institutional limitations implemented by local, state, and federal

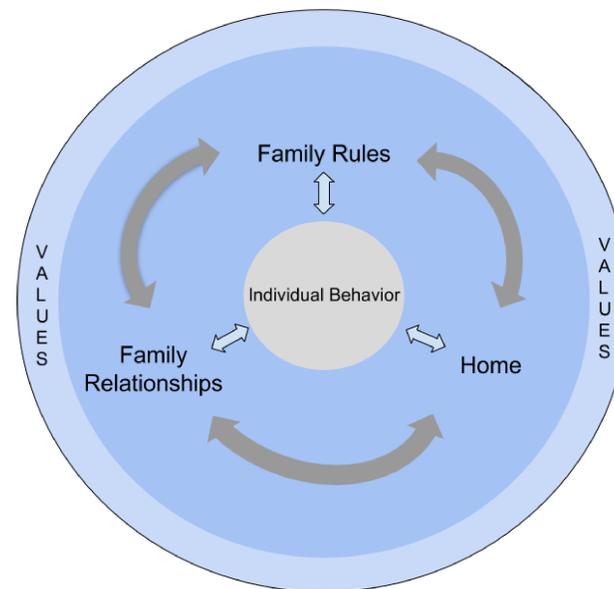


Figure 1. Framework for Behavior Change in the Family Context

jurisdictions, organizations, and public and private entities to govern and regulate behavior. Families are governed by **family rules**, which are explicit or implicit, spoken or unspoken, and both consistently and inconsistently enforced. Family rules are an inseparable part of the family system because they govern interactions, the qualities of relationships, as well as the beliefs and goals of each family member.

Systems and Family Relationships

Systems at the societal and community levels refer to the linkages and relationships among and across individuals, entities, and/or organizations. The **family system** also includes the interaction patterns among family members, the qualities of their relationships, and each person's personality and unique goals and beliefs.

Environment and Home

Environment refers to the physical spaces in which people live, work, learn, recreate, and so forth (Frieden, 2010; Kegler et al., 2015). When examined in a familial context, however, the family's most proximal environment is the **home**. The physical structure of the home combined with its contents, furnishings, outdoor space, connectivity, and other structures provide contextual opportunities for family members to interact with each other and with the features of their environment.

Values

Family rules, family relationships, and the choices made about the home environment are each informed by the **values** held by individual members of the family. For the sake of simplicity, in general, family values originate with parents and, to one degree or another, are taught to children. Children eventually introduce their own values to the family system.

CONCLUSION

Communities are not the only context in which change in policies, systems, and environments should take place in order to attain valuable impacts on health and wellness outcomes. **The context of the family must remain a focal point of family and consumer science programing.**

References are available upon request of the first author.