FAMILY ECOLOGY
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TRUE OR FALSE

• A person can survive alone
• Family, as a concept is deteriorating
• We can “divorce” our family if we want to
• Pets, a close neighbour, a good friend can be considered as family members
1st principle

Family interacts with its environment thus make its own micro system

- Family ecosystem is a subset of a bigger system (*macro system*) that interact, interdependent, involves in transactions with the other systems.
Family is the main institution in any given society that performs the reproductive function, supplies physical, biological & economic needs, and socio-emotional & nurturing functions. 

Family may differ from one another, but its functions on fulfilling the needs of individuals and society remain the same.
3rd principle

- The environment does not determine human behaviour, however it can limit, prohibit or open opportunities and possibilities for family.
  - Family is not an isolated entity from the environment. It has its own degree of control & freedom on its interactions with the environment & procurement of resources.
4th principle

• Decision & actions by family may impact not only the family but also the society, culture, natural & man-made environments.

– The well-being of the world ecology is not only determined by the decisions & actions made by the country (via government) but it is also being influenced by individuals and the family.
Bio-ecological Theory of Human Development

- To enhance your knowledge on family ecology, you need to understand the Bioecological Theory of Human Development (Urie Bronfenbrenner, 1979)
- This theory focuses on human being as a biological & social organism who interacts & makes transactions with & within in his/her environment.
- All processes experienced by the individuals are highly related to people/things/events & changes that occur in his environment due to the ever ongoing interactions & interdependence between human as individuals, family or community and the environments.
- Creation, consumption & resource management to produce creative adaptation, human development & sustainable environment.
• The theory focusses on the role of socio-cultural factor on individual development
• It assumes that family interact & make transaction with multiple environments
• Family is a semi-open system, goal oriented, dynamic & highly adaptive
• Family supplies physical & biological needs for psychosocial development of its members for human betterment
• There are 5 systems that are highly interactive with one another where an individual and his/her family develop throughout his/her life

• Read further:

• EcologyTheory_link.ppt
Development of Family Ecological Perspective

• Historically, family is an important focus in the field of human ecology

• Ellen Swallow Richards concluded that ecology is an “approach” to improve quality of life & quality of the environment by the applications of principles, methods of scientific knowledge

• This application should start at the very early stage of learning within the context of family & home environment where basic needs are met and human behavior are established. HOW?

• Applying knowledge from pure science into social science for human betterment.

• Basic assumption is that human beings can choose, design, transform resources & environment to improve QOL & QOE
FAMILIES WITH VARIOUS CHARACTERISTICS
Structure Ethnic Origin Socio-economic status

WITH INDIVIDUAL & FAMILY ATTRIBUTES
Needs Values Goals Resources Artifacts

INTERACTIONS WITH & WITHIN MULTIPLE ENVIRONMENTS
Natural-biological-physical Human constructed Socio-cultural

TRANSFORM
Energy Information

INVOLVED IN CORE PROCESSES
Adaptation

THROUGH ACTIVITIES / PROCESSES
Perceiving Decision making Sustainability
Organization Management Human development
Communication Technology advancement Design

OUTCOME
Q of Life & Q of Environment
Product of the realisations of values & goals
Human well-being

Environmental Sustainability Practices

Figure: Interrelationships between concepts in Family Ecology theory
sorce: M.M Buboltz & Susan Sontag, 1993)
Theoretical Model of Family Ecosystem

• The model was developed based on the assumptions & concepts of human ecology
• Assumptions such as survival, quality of life, quality and conservation of the environment, production of natural resources are highly related to human activities & adaptation in their environments.
• Family signifies a way of life of human population who do not survive living in isolation, live & adapt to obtain goals, fulfilling needs & to actualize values within the multiple and different environments
• Family can transform values, goals & rules when acting within or reacting to internal & environmental changes
In sum, individuals & their families interdependently influencing and being influenced by 3 types of environments (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993):

- Physical-Biological; Human-constructed; Socio-cultural

Bronfenbrenner used the 5 environments (micro, meso, exso, macro and chrono systems) to show the interactions and transactions between individuals & the environments. Both models highlight the adaptations within the interaction processes between human beings and their environments.
Conrad dan Novick (1996) introduced the basic principles or bases for the ecological paradigm / model:

- Human development can be studied from the perspective of *person-in-environment*.
- The multiple and different environments experienced by human beings will influence his development.
- Each environment has its own risk and protective factors that can inhibit, delay or promote development and growth.
- The influence is bidirectional, creating a complex feedback loops.
- Individuals & families are facing changes and growth. Stress, coping and adaptations are normal developmental process.
The general model observes the interdependence between human beings and the environment in which individuals and families as active participants are influencing and being influenced by the environments both resource based (natural, man made, socio cultural) or the distance based (micro→macro)
CASE STUDY #1

Zura and Azreen are siblings of the same father and they attend the same boarding school. Every weekend, their father will visit them with different women alternately. Zura Azreen never shared about their family. Zura is the youngest child of the first wife, while Azreen is the eldest child of the second wife. The relationship between Zura and Azreen are not like that of siblings.
Alice’s father, who was originally from a rich family, has left his family of origin due to his wish of marrying Alice’s mother, who is of another ethnic group and is a divorcee without children. Their marriage was strongly opposed by both families. They lived far from their family-of-origin and till today, despite their efforts to restore the broken ties throughout their 12 years of marriage and 3 children, their families are still unable to accept them.