

The SEIPA Lens: Informing Safe, Ethical and Inclusive Physical Activity*

Overview

The SEIPA lens provides a multi-level framework for considering the range of supporting and constraining influences to safe, ethical and inclusive physical activity, including sport. It has implications for researchers, clinicians, programmers, and policy and program evaluators by guiding:

1. how research about physical activity is conducted and what is studied,
2. the design and implementation of programming, and
3. the assessment and evaluation of these activities.

Safe



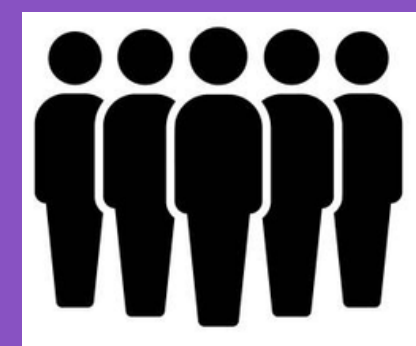
*Risk of harm
is absent or minimized*

Ethical



*Fair, equitable,
respectful*

Inclusive



*Accessible, authentic,
non-judgemental*

Background

Physical activity can be central to healthy individuals, their families, and their communities. Yet unsafe, unethical and exclusionary practices persist – in the study, prescription, design, support, implementation and practice of human movement.

Negative and harmful aspects of physical activity must be addressed, and a safe, ethical and inclusive environment must be supported alongside efforts to understand and promote an active community.

The SEIPA Lens

The SEIPA lens prompts and guides consideration of the variety and levels of influences that may contribute to, or detract from, an individual's safe, ethical and inclusive physical activity experience.

An *individual's* personal experience (perceptions of safety, justice, inclusivity) is at the core of the model, with both supports and constraints to a positive experience highlighted at progressive levels.

These levels include *interpersonal relations* with others (family, friends, other participants, activity leaders), the *institutional and built environment* (organizations, groups, policies, places and spaces) where participation takes place, and the broader *social and cultural values and norms* associated with physical activity.

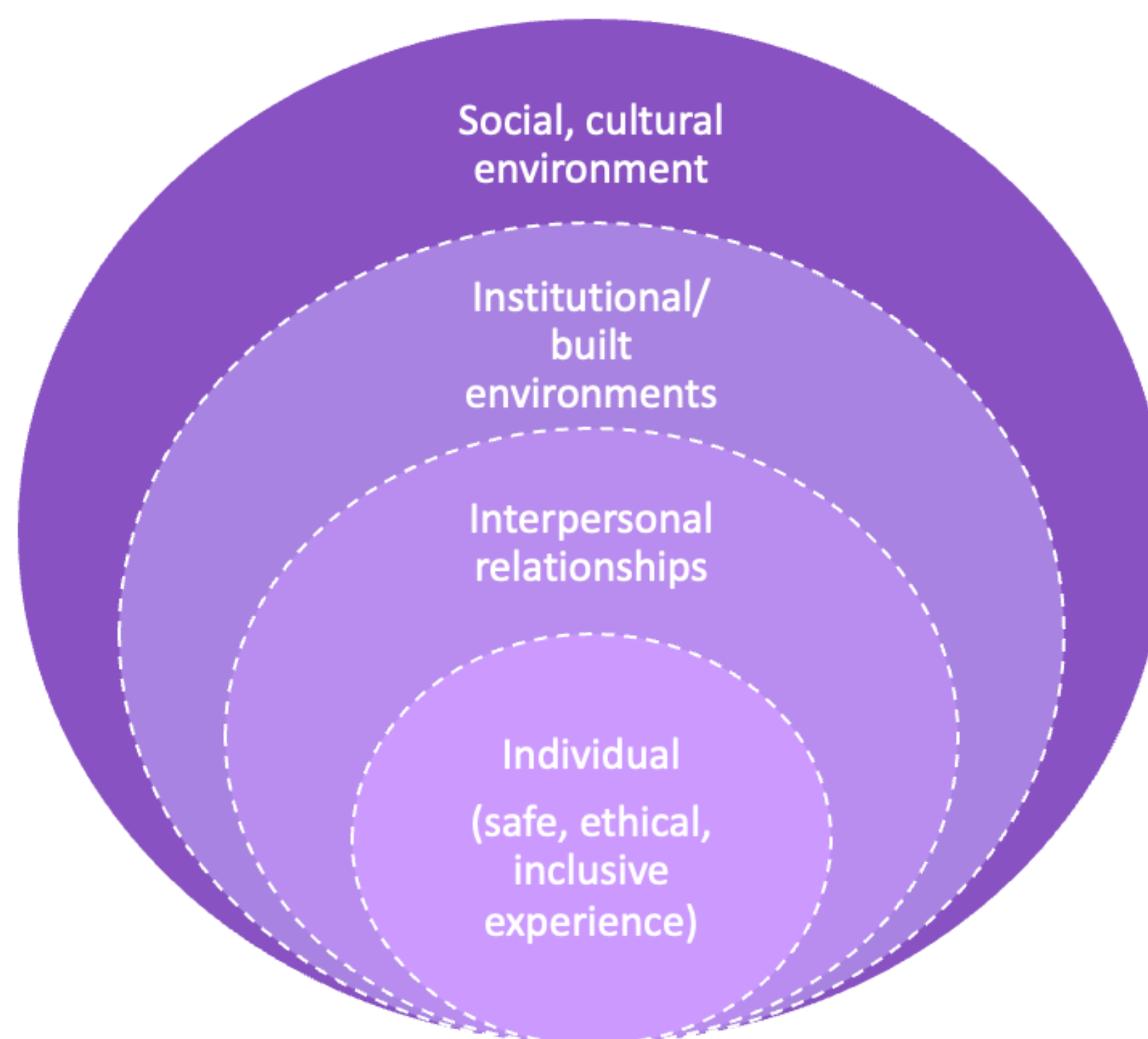
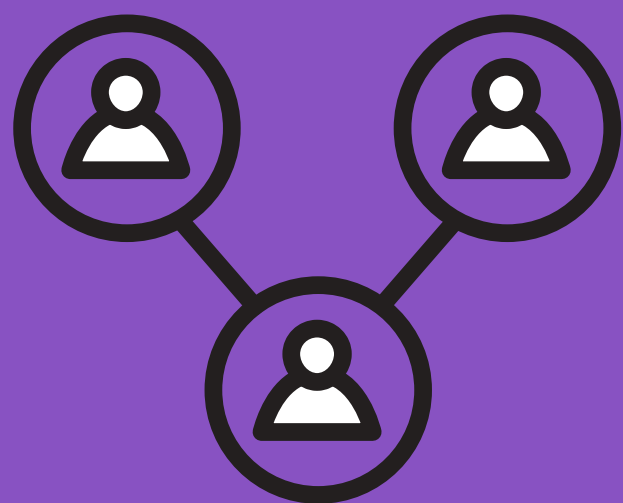
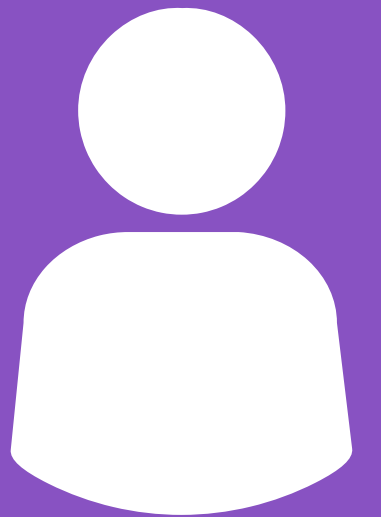


Figure 1. The SEIPA lens – An illustration of the multiple, interacting levels of influence to safe, ethical and inclusive physical activity [informed by Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Harvard University Press.]

There is a dynamic interplay among each of the levels as well; for example, the nature of the built environment may be influenced by broader social values. This complex multi-level lens is consistent with socio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1997).

Understanding the Levels of Influences to Physical Activity Experiences

An **individual's** personal characteristics – their age, gender identity, race/ethnicity, physical ability, socioeconomic status, interests, and so on – can be weighty factors in their physical activity participation. Past and current physical activity experiences, and perceptions of those experiences, are at the root of the individual level. However, the multi-level model emphasizes that an **individual's behaviour and experiences take place within a broader interpersonal, institutional and social/cultural context**. These broader factors – and particularly biases at those levels against any personal characteristics – can dictate opportunities, support and ultimately individual behaviour. It is important to avoid 'blaming the individual' for their decision to not participate.



Interpersonal relationships with those who are close to the individual and their physical activity participation – whether that be a parent or other family member, friends, teammates, a sport/physical activity leader – **may have a profound influence on whether the individual is at risk of (or free from) harm, is treated fairly and respectfully, and can participate as they would like in an environment free of judgement**. This layer of influence is a critical consideration for safe, ethical and inclusive physical activity.

The **institutional** and built environments that support physical activity (groups, organizations, policies, resources) and where it takes place (from bikes paths and parks to fitness clubs, schools and sport facilities) play a key role in whether an individual's experience is safe, ethical and inclusive. Organizational decisions about, for example, programming, resource allocation, and policies impact whether risk of harm is minimized, opportunities are equitable, and physical activity is inclusive. **Physical activity may be inherently risky but where it takes place should be accessible, welcoming and as free from harm as possible**, as well as being respectful and inclusive.



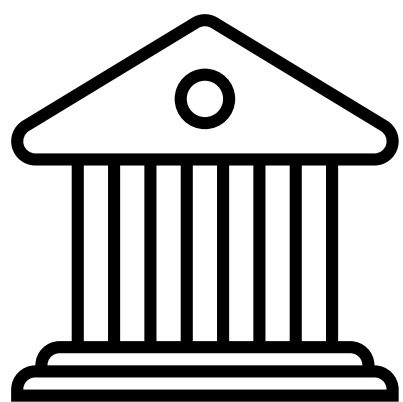
The broader **social** and cultural environment in which individuals, institutions and built environments exist, and the corresponding **values and norms about what represents suitable physical activity and for whom**, can have an immense impact on physical activity behaviours and experiences. This level is furthest away from the individual in the model but **represents how we collectively see and shape the world**, those in it, and what they can and should (and should not) do and how.

“Socially Responsible Physical Activity”

The goal of research, programming, and evaluation is physical activity that is *safe*, where the risk of harm is absent or at least minimized; *ethical* (fair, equitable, respectful); and *inclusive*, accessible, authentic and non-judgemental.

This requires consideration of whether knowledge generation, policies, programs, spaces, and their assessment are in fact ‘socially irresponsible’ (unfair, biased, disrespectful, exclusionary, limiting, uncomfortable).

Consider ways that others may create, or compromise, a safe, ethical and inclusive physical activity environment for an individual.



Consider what policies, programming and resource allocations may support, or constrain, an individual’s safe, ethical and inclusive physical activity experience.

Consider what societal values and norms impact safe, ethical and inclusive physical activity, for all, and how those have changed over time.



It is important to understand – with a critical eye – how each of these levels, and interactively, shape safe (or unsafe), ethical (or unjust), inclusive (or exclusionary) physical activity opportunities and experiences.

Using the SEIPA Lens

For Researchers and Clinicians:

- **Reflect on your own and others' work and perspectives** in the physical activity context with regard to whether potential influences to positive and also unsafe, inequitable, exclusionary experiences are assessed and accounted for.
- **Consider**, for example:
 - Are there other, and intersecting, factors influencing why some groups of individuals tend to be less physically active than others?
 - Have we sufficiently accounted for the influence of others (e.g., friends, coaches, teammates, parents, etc.) on individuals' engagement?
 - What are individuals' perceptions of the broader social and cultural factors that are supporting or constraining their participation?
- Multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary research projects and clinical teams can support the investigation and understanding of the impact of intersecting characteristics and interacting levels of influence.

For Programmers:

- **Reflect on the current design, support, and implementation** (what, how, where, why) of physical activity programs with regard to potential influences at each level to individuals' safe, ethical and inclusive experience.
- **Consider**, for example:
 - Are there interpersonal relationships and situations that compromise, or support, a positive physical activity experience?
 - Are the places and spaces where individuals participate safe, equitable, accessible, respectful and inclusive (or not)?
 - What policies and organizational practices support, or compromise, a positive experience for all?

For Policy and Program Evaluators:

- **Reflect on the range of factors that may explain policy and program design and impact** at the individual, interpersonal, institutional and social/cultural levels. An interactive effect among the levels should be expected.
- **Consider**, for example:
 - What factors at each of the levels shaped the design and further implementation, and impact of physical activity policy?
 - Did interpersonal, institutional and/or social/cultural factors influence individuals' experiences and the outcomes of the program?

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