

Building a Healthier Community for Teens: Environmental Strategies to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

*Expanding our Experience and Expertise: Implementing
Effective Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Programs*

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Sophie Godley, MPH

Clinical Assistant Professor

Director, Undergraduate Education

Disclaimer

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Sophie Godley, MPH

- Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Community Health Sciences, Director of Undergraduate Education
- Boston University School of Public Health

My perspective

- **Public health**
 - Data, policies, context
- **Community**
 - Geography matters
- **Behavioral Science**
 - Preventing disease and promoting health
- **Culture**
- **Love**

Today's Learning Objectives

- 1) Evaluate the evidence for the built environment - health link;
- 2) Explain the role of the built environment in the context of other factors that influence adolescent sexual health;
- 3) Discuss how the built environment might influence other efforts to protect and promote adolescent sexual health;
- 4) Articulate three strategies for supporting healthy youth sexuality in communities; and
- 5) Propose built environment-based interventions, based on current evidence and the lessons learned from the past studies of the built environment, to promote adolescent health

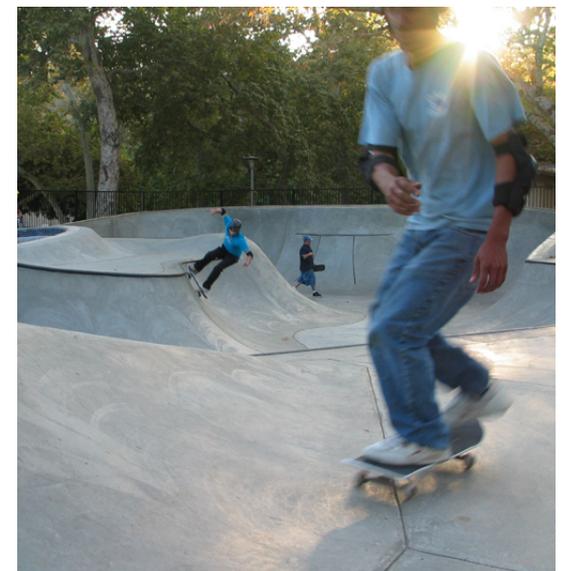
What crazy things did you do when you were a teenager?

Be careful what you post on Facebook. Whatever you do, it will be pulled up later in your life.

President Obama, September 8, 2009 Wakefield, VA



How do we support youth in our communities?



Bo

The built environment

A story about public health, the environment, our mismatched efforts, and our youth

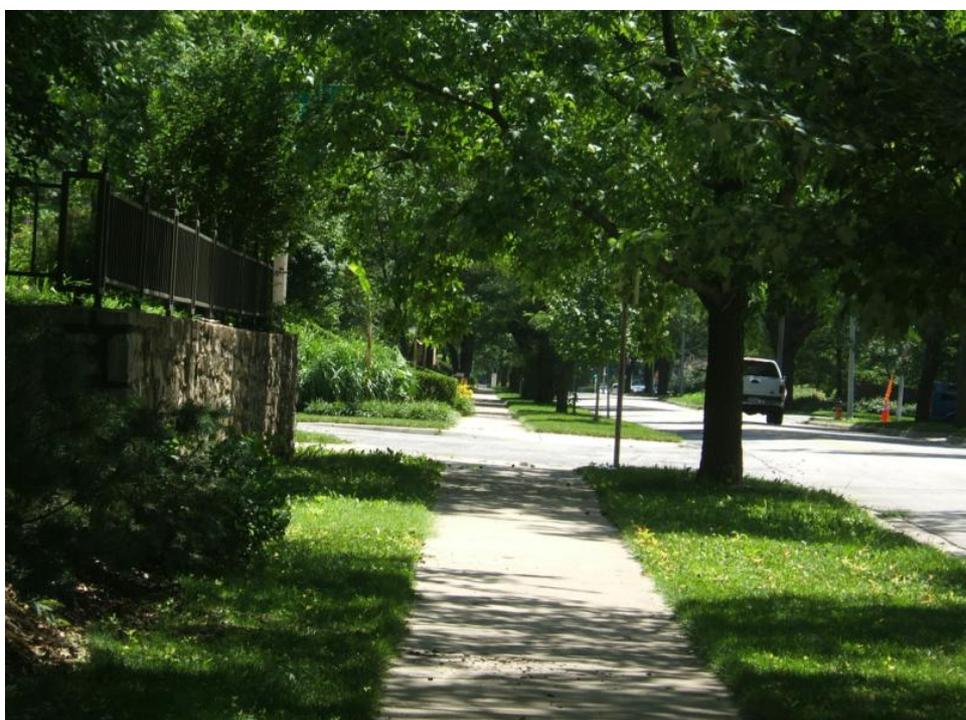
■ What is the built environment?

human modified aspects of environment e.g. homes, schools, workplaces, parks, industrial areas, farms, roads and highways.



The impact on our health

- Air (breathing & asthma)
- Land (what we eat, how we move)
- Water (what we drink)
- Social environment (how we live)



Public Health and the Built Environment

- Environmental Health
- Heart Disease and Stroke
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Cancer
- Injuries
- Lyme Disease
- Sexual health?



What is the Impact of the Built Environment on Sexual Health?

Unhealthy Community

Unsafe even in daylight

No parks/areas for physical exercise

Convenience/liquor stores, cigarette and liquor billboards, no grocery stores

Streets and sidewalks in disrepair

Lack of public transportation, walking or biking paths

Healthy Community

Safe neighborhoods, safe schools, safe walking routes

Well-equipped parks and open spaces/organized community recreation

Well-stocked grocery stores offering nutritious foods

Clean streets that are easy to navigate

Accessible, safe public transportation, walking and biking paths

What Researchers Do and Don't Know about Environment & Health

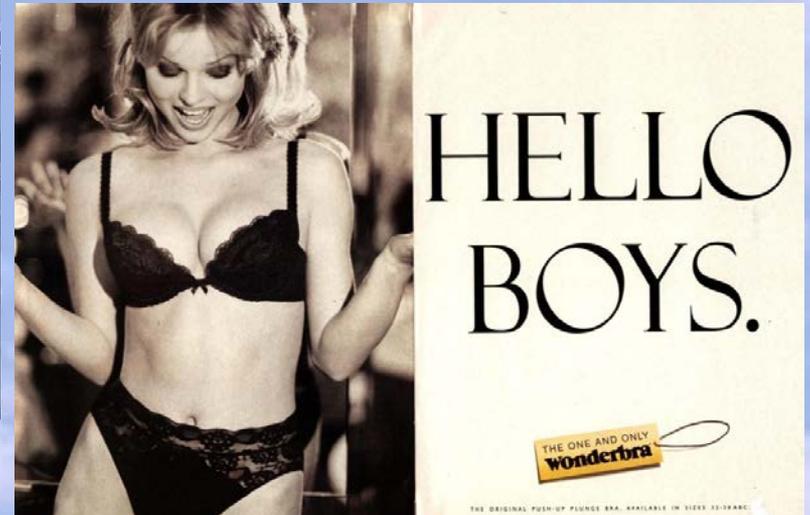
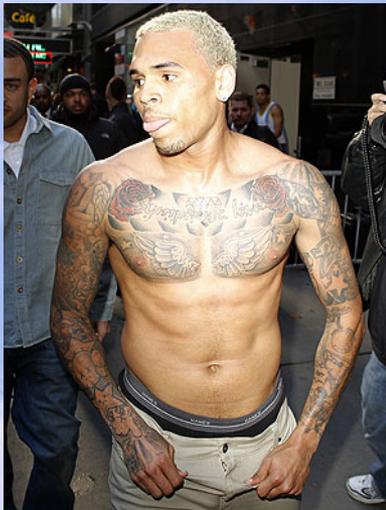
- We do know that differences in density, street pattern, mixed use, and pedestrian infrastructure seem to affect walking for adults
- But so does income and personal preference, etc.
- We don't know **how much** the environment matters and who is most affected, other than children
- We don't know whether the perceived vs. the real environment is most important
- We don't know which aspects are key—e.g. residential or employment density, sidewalks or crosswalks

Divestment of Urban Areas; Sprawl

- Unplanned, land-extensive, low density, leapfrog development
- Segregation of land uses
- Low connectivity, large distances, extensive road construction; automobile dominance
- Shift of development and investment from inner city to periphery
- Little public open space



Why are youth so vulnerable to Environmental Health Risks?



How does sprawl affect youth & child health?

- **Land use:** Obesity, physical activity
- **Water quantity** and quality
- **Automobile dependence**
- **Air pollution and asthma**
- ↑ Car crashes
- ↑ Pedestrian injuries
- **Social processes**
- **Mental health**
- ↓ Social capital
- **Unaffordable housing & inequity**



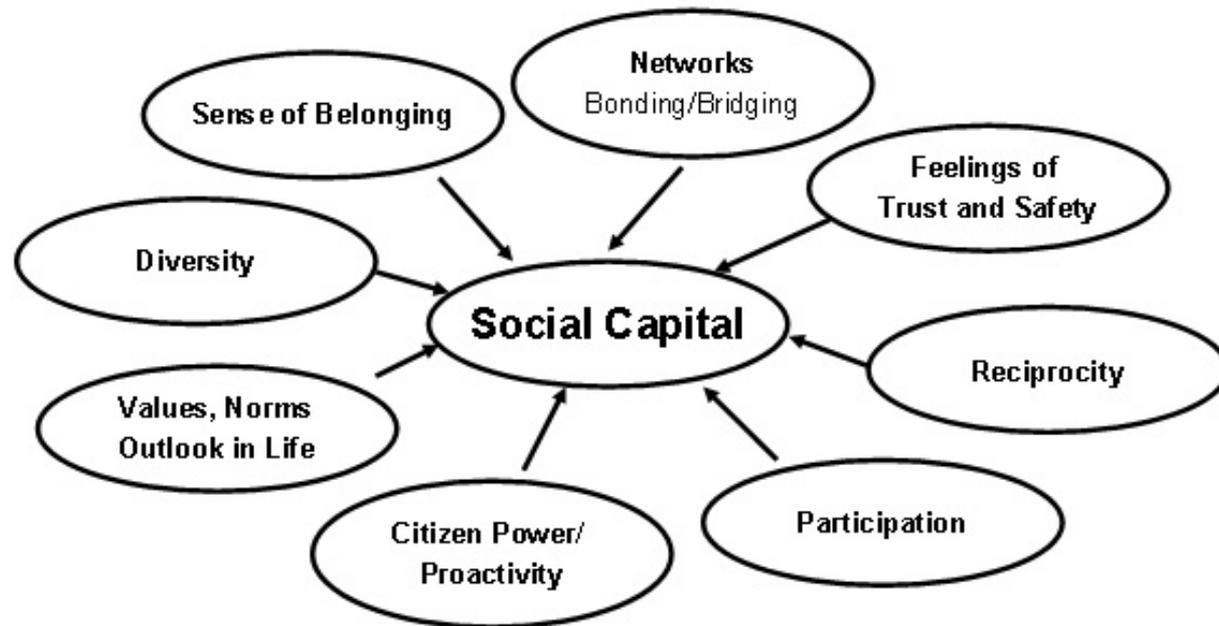
Mental Health Issues Related to Community Design

- Depression/helplessness: relieved by physical activity, social interaction, participation
- Stress: aggravated by long commutes
- Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder: ? related to limited opportunities for outdoor play
- Green space improves function in ADHD (Taylor & Kuo, 2011)
- Violent Behavior – Impulse Control ?



Social Capital

Those features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions.



Community Design and Social Capital

- More driving time means less time with family, friends, and civic organizations.
- Putnam: every 10 minutes of commute time means a 10% decline in social capital
- The need for elders/ young families to change neighborhoods.



Neighborhoods & Sexual Health?

- Disconnected residents
- Community members fear young people, no longer “look out” for them
- When there is nothing for youth to do, what do they do?
- “Broken windows” (Cohen, et. al. 2001)
- HIV/AIDS and the Bronx
- Concentrations of poverty
- Schools, homes, streets, businesses send messages of worth to youth

And, other environmental factors

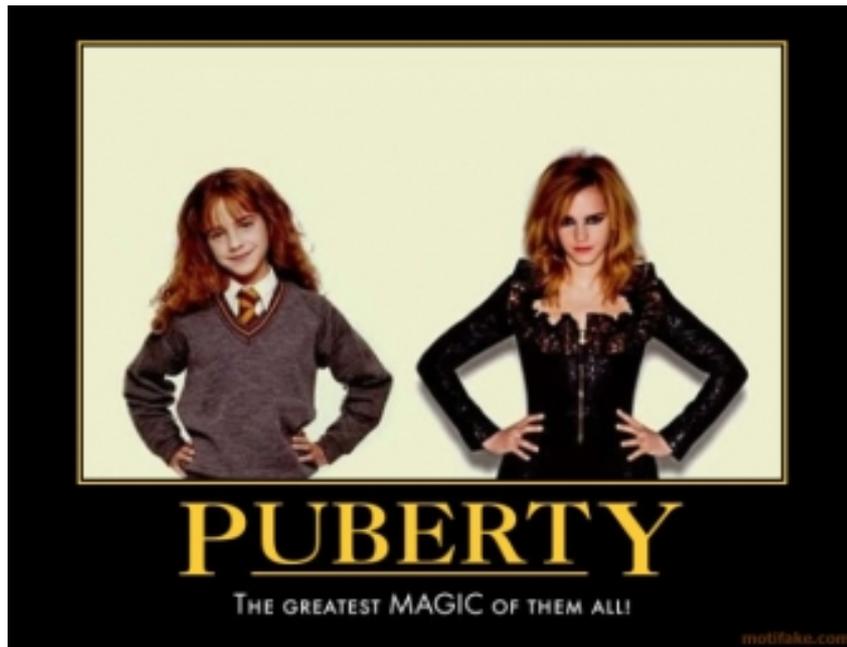
- Access to information about sexual health, healthy relationships, gender roles
- Access to birth control, protection
- Media: roles for girls and boys
- Gender limiting success
- Relationships: models
- Family

Key elements of child development

- Support
- Empowerment
- Boundaries and expectations
- Constructive use of time
- Positive values
- Positive identity
- Commitment to learning
- Social competence

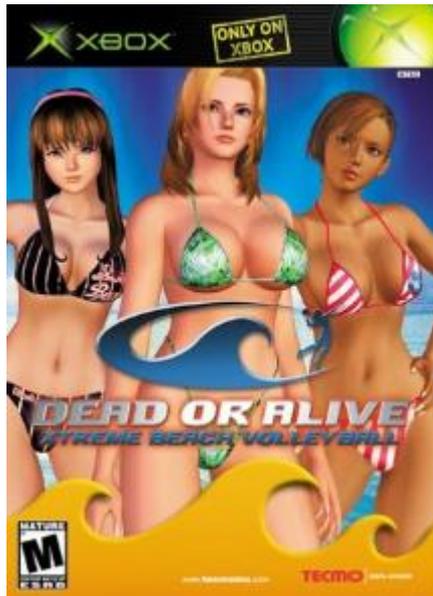
Youth Sensitivity

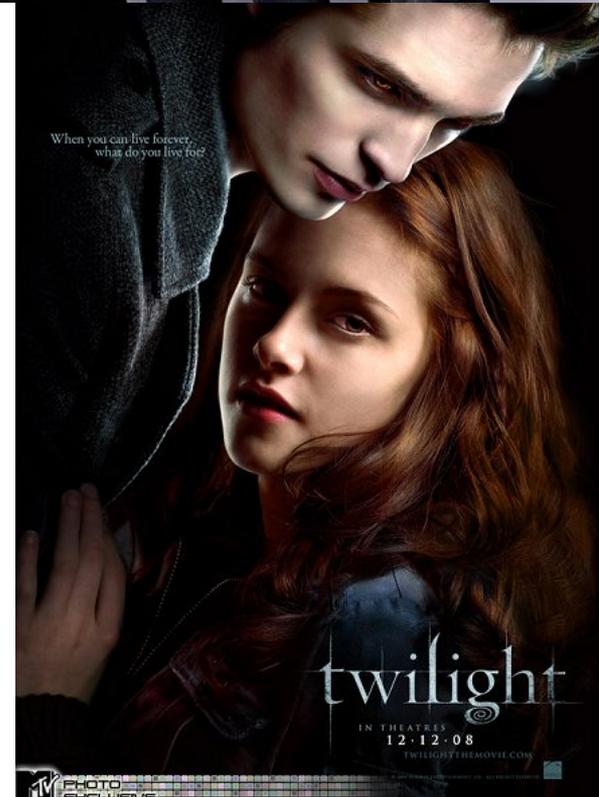
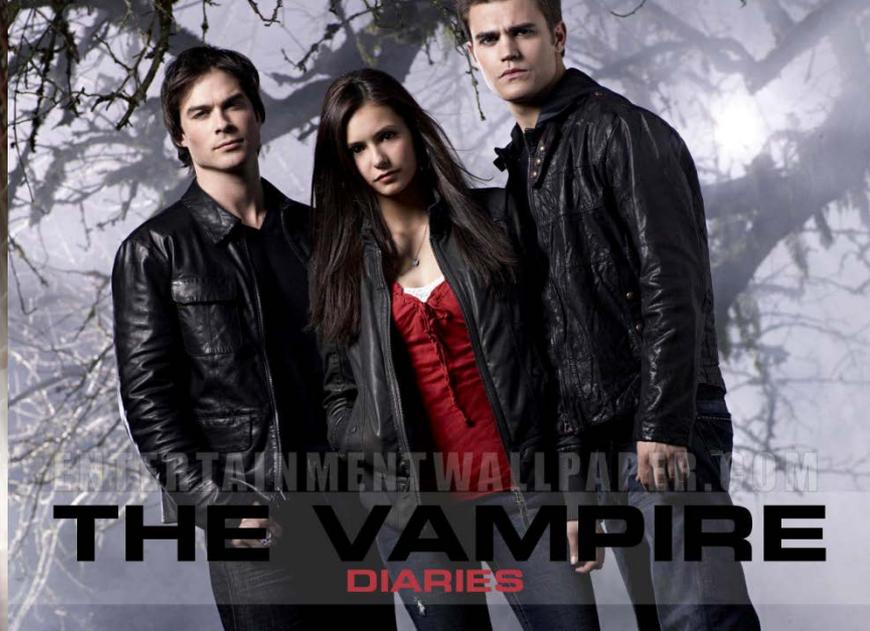
- Youth are developing (physically, emotionally, socially, brain)
- Youth differ in their ability to absorb, detoxify, and excrete pollutants; including “mental pollutants”
- Youth pass through critical developmental periods when they may be especially sensitive to environmental agents



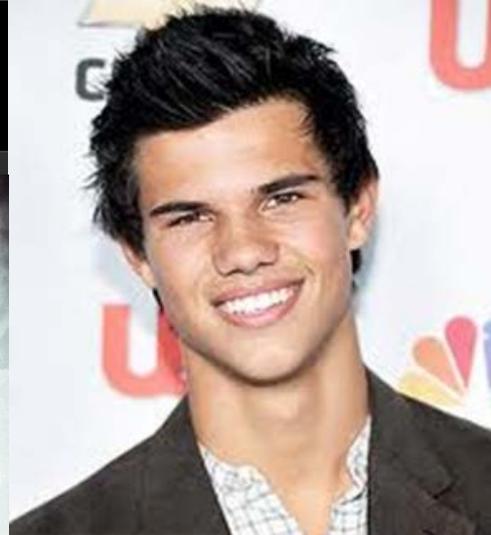
Connections with early puberty

- Emerging research
- Hormones, endocrine disruptors
- Media exposure





Messages for Girls & Boys



The 17 Biggest FASHION Moments / Of 2007 Inside!

SEVENTEEN

Rihanna
Style Star
Of The Year
See Page 64

“I Don't Like To Follow Trends As Much As I Like To Set Trends”

PLUS:
Jessica Alba
Beyoncé
Avril Lavigne
& More!

The cover of Seventeen magazine features a close-up of Rihanna's face. She is wearing a purple top and a colorful necklace. The magazine title 'SEVENTEEN' is in large, stylized letters. Text on the cover includes 'The 17 Biggest FASHION Moments / Of 2007 Inside!', 'Rihanna Style Star Of The Year See Page 64', and 'PLUS: Jessica Alba Beyoncé Avril Lavigne & More!'. A quote from Rihanna is also present: 'I Don't Like To Follow Trends As Much As I Like To Set Trends'.

Messages being delivered

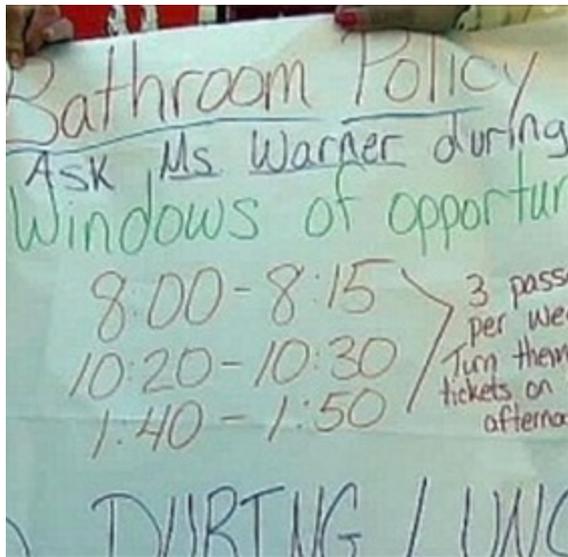


- Drinking and sex go hand-in-hand: that's normal.
- Rihanna did something that made Chris Brown mad – it was her fault he hit her.³
- It's OK to let your boyfriend sneak into your room at night and watch you sleep.
- It's important to keep your relationships a secret from your parents.
- Sexting is normal.



OPTIONS FOR SUCCESS





MESSAGES DELIVERED TO YOUTH



STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE A HEALTHY BUILT ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUTH

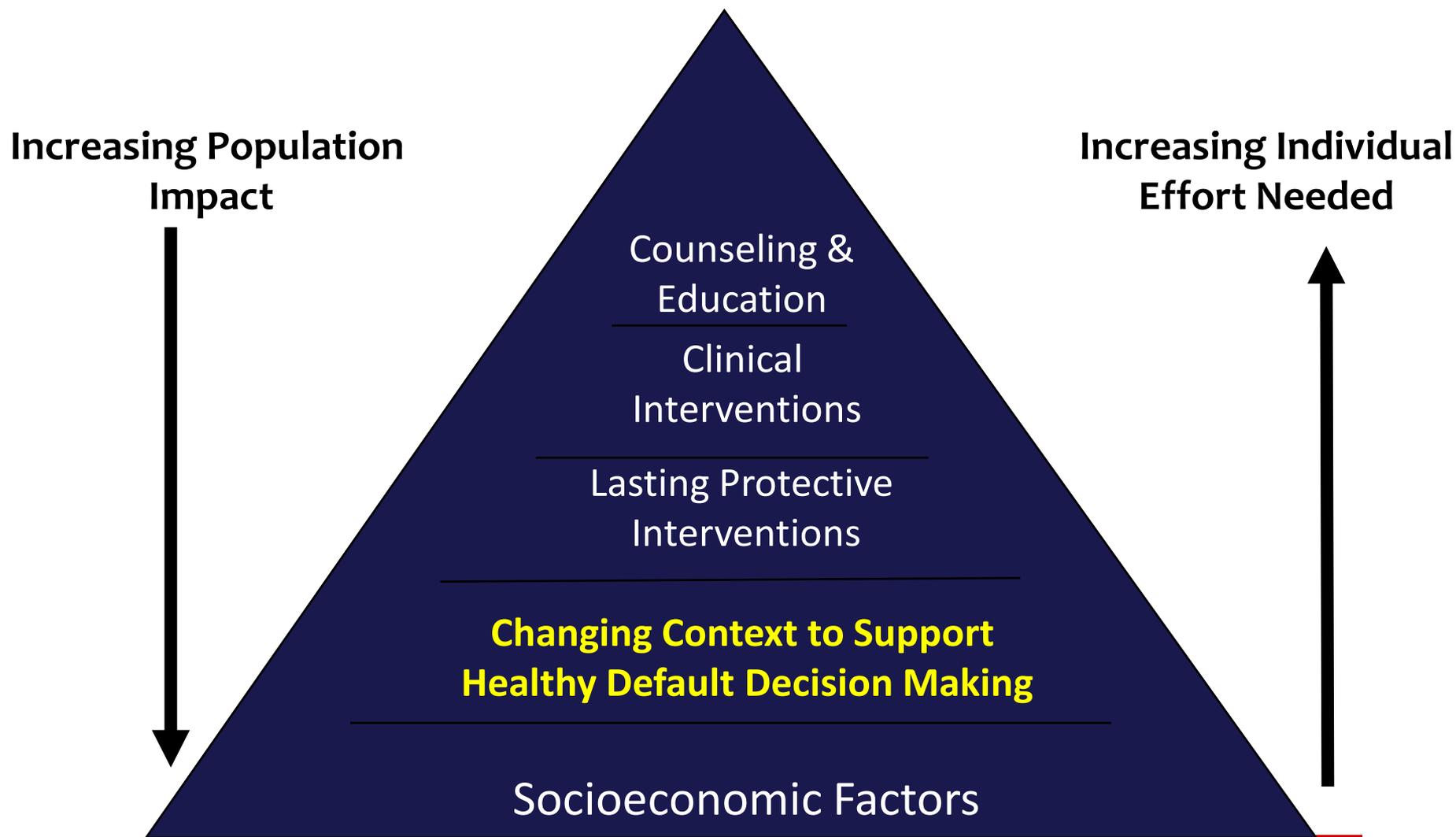
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GETTING FROM PROBLEM TO SOLUTION...

Health Impact Pyramid



Most Common Approaches to Health Behavior Change

Trying to change individual behavior directly through:

- Education
- Awareness
- Early Intervention
- Fear Tactics



What's Wrong with this Approach?

- Knowledge alone does not alter behavior
- Individual behavior is determined to a large extent by social environment

Why is this particularly ineffective with youth?

Developmental risk

- Self-control in progress
 - **Impulsivity**
 - Excessive **sensation-seeking**
- Short-sightedness
- Failure to think ahead
- Susceptibility to influence of others
- Orientation toward immediate gratification
- Yes, they really are performing.



A true sense of invincibility

- Incapable of being conquered, overcome, or subdued
- More pronounced in high-risk youth
- Newly enhanced physical and cognitive abilities, combined with increased independence make teenagers feel very powerful
- Convinced that consequences will not apply to them



Perceptions of Risk & Vulnerability

- Do they have the skills needed to assess risk? (sometimes overestimate)
- Do they assess and perceive risk as adults do? (sometimes)
- A developmental-ecological perspective:
 - Recognize the timing of risk issues with dangerous behavior
 - The role of peers & social norms
 - Contextual factors
 - **Make the EASY, SIMPLE, NORMAL choice the healthy one**

Developmental opportunity

- Urge to “belong”
 - Strong sense of right and wrong
 - Still a blank canvass
 - Craving feedback
 - Craving boundaries
- *Caring relationships*
 - *High expectations*
 - *Opportunities for meaningful participation*

Socio-Ecological Model

Definitions

PUBLIC POLICY - Developing and enforcing state and local policies that can increase beneficial health behaviors. Developing media campaigns that promote public awareness of the health need and advocacy for change.

Public Policy

COMMUNITY - Coordinating the efforts of all members of a community (organizations, community leaders, and citizens) to bring about change.

Community

ORGANIZATIONAL - Changing the policies, practices, and physical environment of an organization (e.g., a workplace, health care setting, a school/child care, a faith organization, or another type of community organization) to support behavior change.

Organizational

INTERPERSONAL - Recognizing that groups provide social identity and support, interpersonal interventions target groups, such as family members or peers.

Interpersonal

Individual

INDIVIDUAL - Motivating change in individual behavior by increasing knowledge, or influencing attitudes or challenging beliefs.

“It is unreasonable to expect that people will change their behavior easily when so many forces in the social, cultural and physical environments conspire against such change.”

~ Institute of Medicine

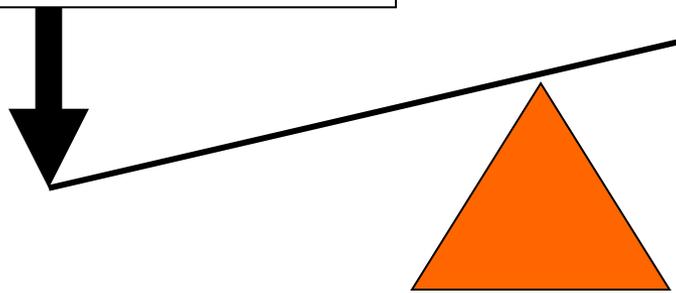
Are we out of balance?



sexual risks

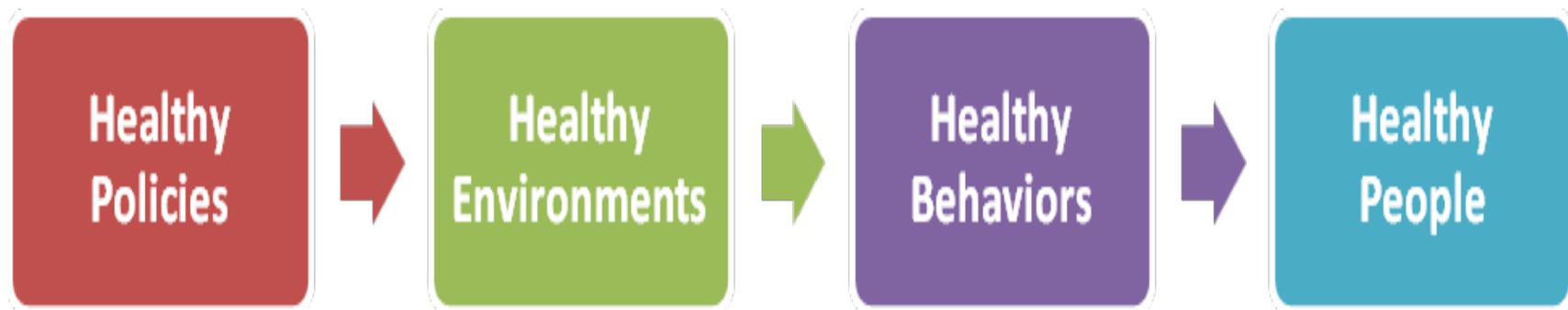


protective factors



Why Policy, Systems and Environmental (PSE) Change Strategies?

- Build on lessons learned
- Want to see community-level change
- More sustainable
- Make the healthy behavior the easier behavior
- Address social justice by equalizing conditions



WHAT'S AN EXAMPLE OF A HEALTHY SEXUALITY POLICY?

WHAT'S AN EXAMPLE OF A SEXUALLY HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Sophie's Suggestions

- Condom availability
- Access to STD screening, treatment, PDT
- Askable, loving adults
- Many opportunities for success
- Gender equity
- Models of healthy relationships
- Normalcy & promotion of delay of initiation, space between partners, and using protection

Contact

- **Sophie Godley, MPH**
- Boston University School of Public Health
- Talbot Building 715 Albany St. Office 424 East Wing
- Boston, MA 02118
- Ph: 617/638-5296 Email: sgodley@bu.edu
- Facebook: [Sophie Godley](#)
- Twitter: [@sophiesalibi](#)