

Healthy Child Development at Different Levels of Social Organization: From Neurons to Neighbourhoods to Nation-States

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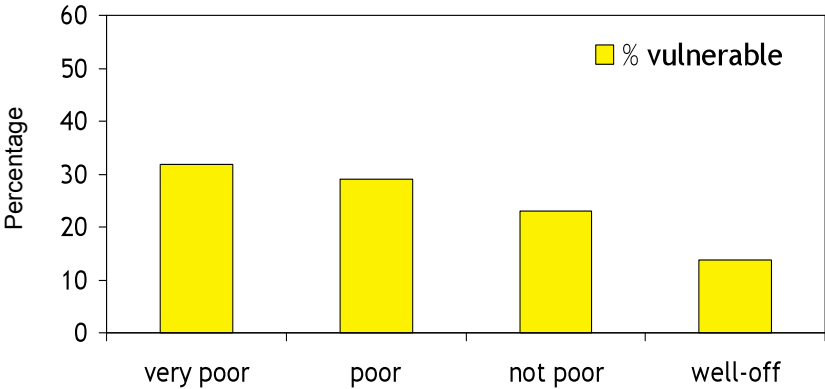
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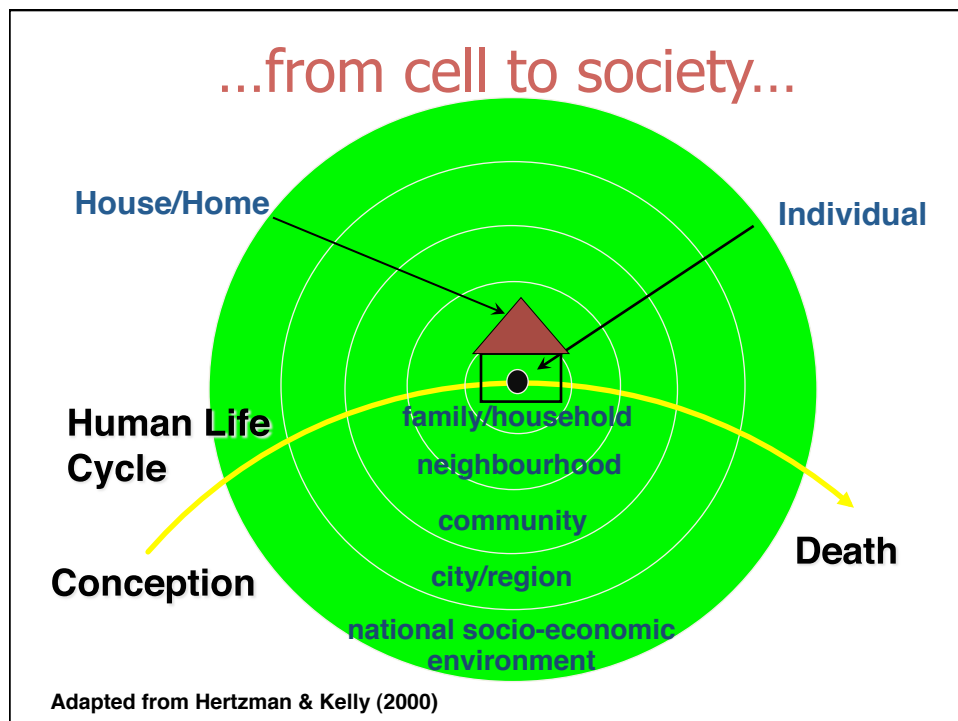
Canada: % Vulnerable on EDI by Socio-Economic Status



Source: NLSCY/UEY 1999-2000; EDI 1999-2000

Causes of Disparities in Healthy Child Development

- There is a strong tendency *built into our systems* to individualize the causes
 - Leads to a focus on remedial treatment downstream
- Ignores *systematic inequities* that are unjust, unfair, and *avoidable*
- What are the causes of the causes?
 - of both negative and positive outcomes
- What factors at other levels of social organization facilitate equitable outcomes?
- Neurons ⇔ Neighbourhoods ⇔ Nation-states

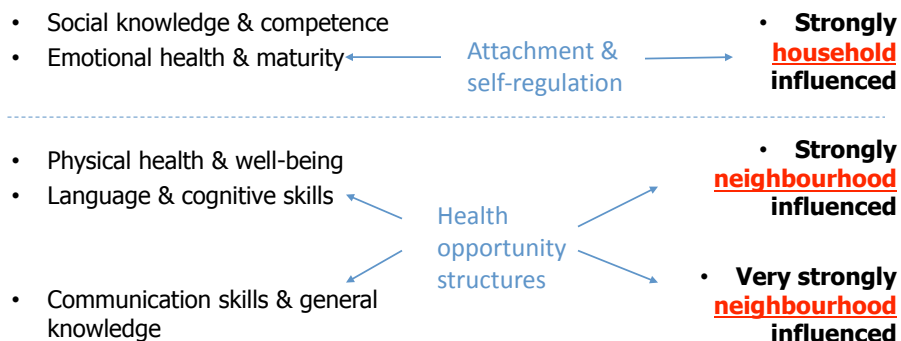


Analysing the Causes of the Causes

- It's one thing to say that factors at different scales matter;
 - It's another matter to say **which factors** should be addressed at **which scale**;
 - It's yet another matter to say **how** we address factors at different scales
- Implies that different scales offer new, maybe complimentary *intervention opportunities*
- The following addresses housing, neighbourhoods and related national policies

Levels of influence and pathways

According to a Vancouver study by Oliver, Dunn, Kohen & Hertzman (2007)...



Source: Oliver, Dunn, Kohen & Hertzman (2007) *Environment & Planning A*

Canadian Housing Data

- incomes \leq or \geq for 90% of Canadians past 25 years
 - most working more to reach current levels
- 2007 poll: 67% Canadians believe they are not benefiting from economic growth
- Toronto housing affordability at its worst since 1990
 - 20.5% of Toronto renters spend >30% on shelter
 - 57.9% of female lone parent renter families live in unaffordable housing
 - among poorest quintile, 54.5% in 'core housing need'
- households spending >30% on housing are
 - 2X more likely to have depressive / anxious symptoms
 - 31% more likely to have fair / poor health (Dunn 2002)
- very strong relationship between after-shelter income and food insecurity in families w/ kids

A Conceptual Model of Housing & Health

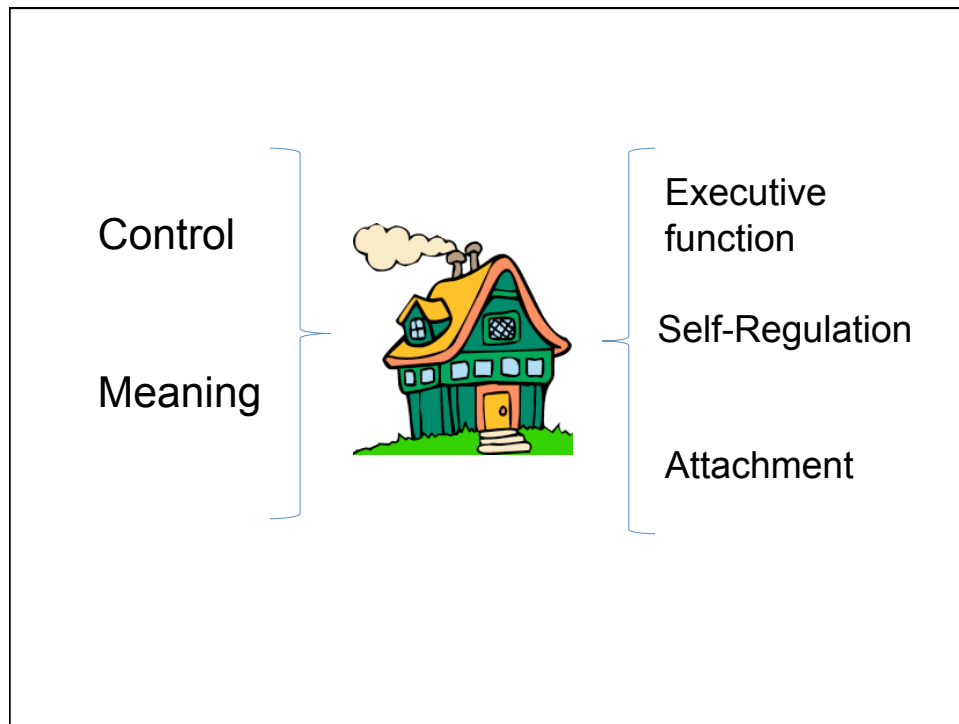
- Biological, Chemical & Physical Hazards
- Physical Design (accidents, size, organization of space)
- Psychological Benefits (control, meaning)

The Home, Security & Control

- Williams (1987) sums up the importance of control in housing and home for lifecourse development when he says,
“[T]he home, in a variety of ways, penetrates deeply into the core of our social being. Our notions of privacy, freedom and choice are, for example, centred in part upon conceptions of the home as a location (both physical and social) where these ideas may be exercised “(156).

The Home & Meaning

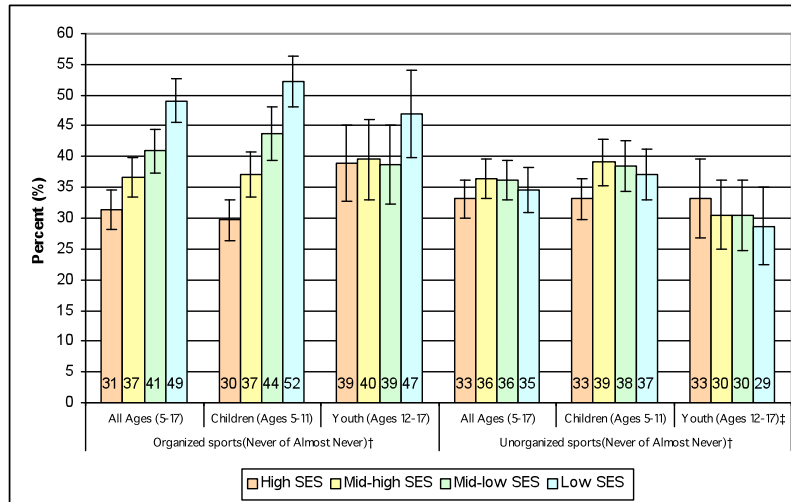
- As Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) put it,
“home is much more than a shelter, it is a world in which a person can create a material environment that embodies what he or she considers significant. In this sense, the home becomes the most powerful symbol of the self of the inhabitant who dwells within it” (p. 123).



A Conceptual Model of Housing & Health

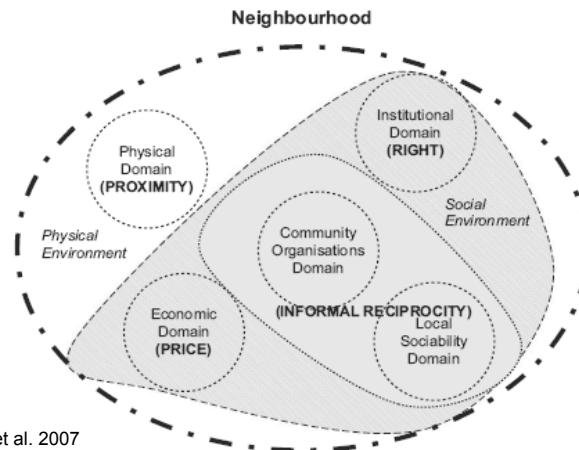
- Biological, Chemical & Physical Hazards
- Physical Design (accidents, size, organization of space)
- Psychological Benefits (control, meaning)
- Social Benefits (friendships, neighbours)
- Financial Dimensions? (own /rent; affordability)
- Location (near services, hazards, community life, etc.)

'Never' or 'Almost Never' Participated in (un)Organized by Sports by SES



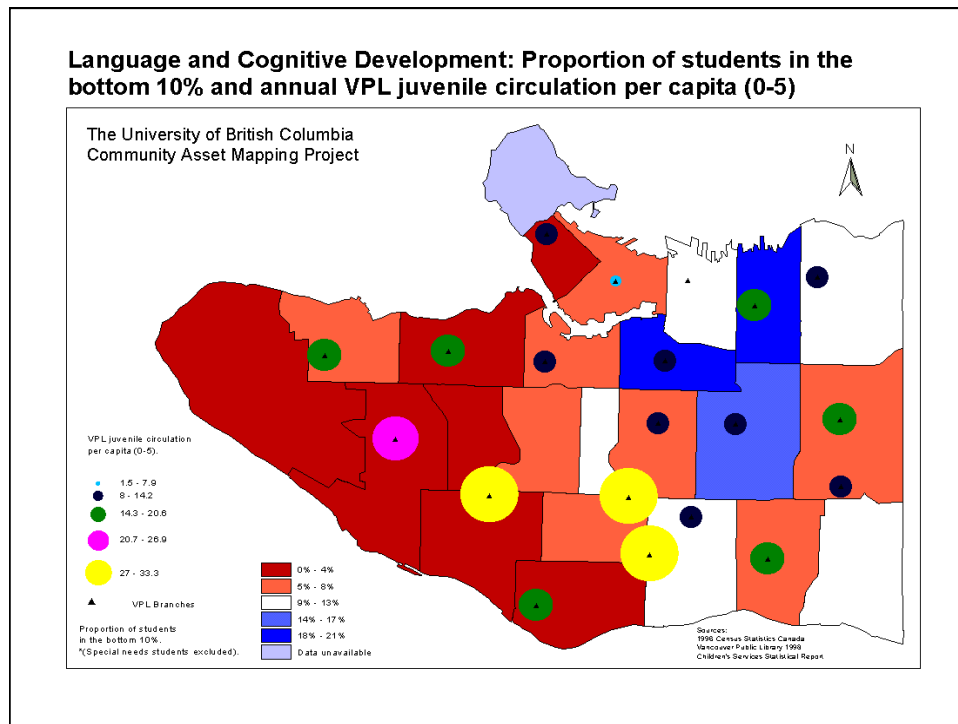
Source: Oliver & Hayes (2007) *Can J Pub Health*

Rules Governing Access to Neighbourhood Child Dev't Resources



Source: Bernard, et al. 2007

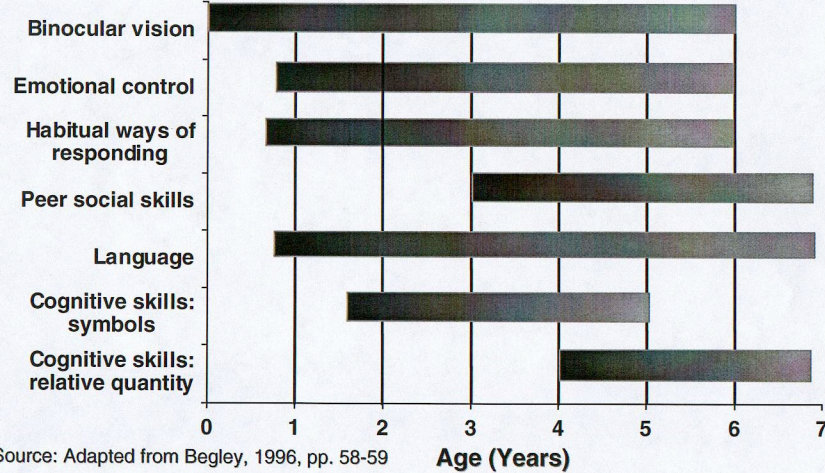
Fig. 1. Neighbourhood environments and rules of access. *Note:* Four sets of rules (indicated in bold capital letters) determine access to neighbourhood resources coming from the physical environment as well as from the social environment. The neighbourhood social environment (indicated by the light shade of grey) comprises four domains. Two of these domains (indicated by the darker shade of grey) both obey the rule of informal reciprocity. All these environments and domains are in mutual interaction.



Appropriate Level of Intervention May Not be Straightforward: Examples

- Oliver, et al.: neighbourhood factors strongly influence language & cognitive development
 - Yet individual / household factors are influential too
 - Need different approaches at different levels at different ages

Critical Periods for Some Components of School Readiness



Appropriate Level of Intervention May Not be Straightforward: Examples

- Oliver, et al.: neighbourhood factors strongly influence language & cognitive development
 - Yet individual / household factors are influential too
 - Need different approaches at different levels at different ages
- Oliver, et al.: Household / family factors strongly influence emotional maturity & social development
 - In part because the critical period is at a young age
 - Poses a serious policy / program challenge: parenting programs, the usual response, are stigmatizing for the hardest to reach, most disadvantaged groups

How to make exposure to the causes of strong attachment, self-regulation, and executive function as automatic as turning on the tap and getting clean water?

Implications for Policy

- Need to consider how specific policy sectors (e.g., housing, urban planning, parks & rec) may work to reduce inequities in healthy child development
- No longer can we accept that strategies involving housing and '**privatization of risk**' can be pursued without serious negative consequences
- Need a focus on **security of tenure, affordability** adequacy of housing for early life development
- Also need to emphasize neighbourhood health opportunity structures and the **rules that govern access to resources in neighbourhoods**