

HSC4211 Health, Behavior and Society

## Theories and Concepts in Public Health

Part One

## Lecture Outline

- Introduction to theory
- Ecological perspective of health

## Introduction to theory

- **What is theory?**
  - "A systematic way of understanding events or situations" (Rimer & Glanz, 2005, p.4)
- **Why is it important?**
  - Provides an understanding of health and the factors that influence health and health behaviors
  - Used to guide why people behave in a specific way, what we should know, and what should be done to change human behavior

## Introduction to theory

- **Concepts**
  - Primary elements of a theory
- **Constructs**
  - Key concepts of a given theory
- **Variables**
  - The operational forms of constructs
- **Models**
  - Often draw on a number of theories to help understand a particular problem

## Introduction to theory

- **Explanatory theory vs Change theory**
  - **Explanatory Theory**
    - Describe the reasons why a problem exist
    - Search for factors that contribute to a problem
  - **Change Theory**
    - Guides the development of health interventions
    - Explains how to change health behaviors
    - Involves assumptions

## Ecological perspective of health

- **Background**
  - Derived from general systems theory which views phenomena as open systems composed of mutually interacting components (Coreil, Bryant, & Henderson, 2001)
- Bronfenbrenner's framework** (White, 2002)
  - Microsystem : individual role and relations
  - Mesosystem : interrelations between two or more settings
  - Exosystem : external setting that does not include the person
  - Macrosystem : culture

### Ecological perspective of health

- o **Background cont.**
  - Health is a product of an interdependent relationship between the individual and subsystems of the ecosystem such as family, community, culture, and physical and social environment (Green, 1991).

### Ecological perspective of health

\* An ecological perspective: Levels of Influence (McLeroy et al., 1988)

| Concept                    | Definition  |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Intrapersonal Level</b> | Individual characteristics that influence behavior, such as knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and personality traits   |
| <b>Interpersonal Level</b> | Interpersonal processes and primary groups, including family, friends, and peers that provide social identity, support, and role definition                         |
| <b>Community Level</b>     | Rules, regulations, policies, and informal structures, which may constrain or promote recommended behaviors   |
| Institutional Factors      |   |
| Community Factors          | Social networks and norms, or standards, which exist as formal or informal among individuals, groups, and organizations   |
| Public Policy              | Local, state, and federal policies and laws that regulate or support healthy actions and practices for disease prevention, early detection, control, and management |

### Ecological Perspective of Health

**Contextual** → **Individual-level**

|                               |   |  |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Physical environment          | Sociodemographics - age, race, ethnicity, education, income                     |  |
| Social environment            |   |  |
| Health care                   | Psychosocial - compliance, coping   |  |
| Organizational, institutional | Lifestyle - exercise, diet, alcohol, smoking, sexual behavior, illicit drug use |  |
| Economic resources            |   |  |
| Societal, political           | Psychological - beliefs, attitudes, personality                                 |  |

### Ecological perspective of health

- o **Key concepts (Rimer and Glanz, 2005)**
  - Health behavior both affects and is affected by multiple levels of influence
  - Individual behavior both shapes, and is shaped by the social environment (Reciprocal causation).

### Ecological perspective of health

- o **Example**
  - 20 year old man who does not exercise
    - Intrapersonal level - believes exercise is not important
    - Interpersonal level - no friend/ family member to exercise with
    - Community level
      - Institutional factors: on-campus rec center hours not conducive to school schedule
      - Community factors: social norms do not support exercise
      - Public policy: no policies to incentivize activity
  - What is an example from your own life?

### Application of Social Ecological Model

- o Interpersonal violence in adolescence: Ecological correlates of self-reported perpetration by Banyard, Cross, & Modecki (2006).
  - **Individual factors:** Victimization history, alcohol and drug use, depressed mood, and worries
  - **Interpersonal factors:** Parental divorce, parental monitoring, and parental support
  - **Community factors:** neighborhood monitoring, neighborhood support, school attachment, and social responsibility

## Ecological perspective of health

### o Principles of Ecological perspective on health behavior change

1. Multiple levels of factors influence health behaviors.
2. Influences interact across levels.
3. Multi-level interventions should be most effective in changing behavior.
4. Ecological models are most powerful when they are behavior-specific.

## Resources

- o Coreil, J., Bryant, C., & Henderson, J.N. (2001). *Social and Behavioral Foundations of Public Health*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- o Glanz, K., Rimer, B.K., & Viswanath, (2008). *Health behavior and health education: Theory, research, and practice*. California: Jossey-Bass.
- o Green, L. W. (1991). *Health promotion planning : an educational and nvironmental approach* (2nd ed.). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Pub. Co.
- o McLeroy, K. R., Bibeau, D., Steckler, A., & Glanz, K. (1988). An ecological perspective on health promotion programs. *Health education quarterly*, 15(4), 351-377.
- o Rimer, B.K., & Glanz, K. (1995). *Theory at a glance: A guide for health education practice* [NIH Pub. No. 95-3896]. Washington, D.C.: National Cancer Institute.
- o White, J. (2002). *Family Theories* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.