

LIFE COURSE THEORY

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AGENDA

- Brief history and overview of Life Course Theory (LCT)
- Basic principles of LCT
- LCT in the context of a case example
- Play the Life Course game
- Final thoughts

REFLECTING ON YOUR LIFE...

- Think back to an event that had a significant impact on your life course...
 - How did this event impact your health and wellness?
 - How might this event impact your life moving forward?

LIFE COURSE THEORY OVERVIEW

- Why do health disparities persist across population groups, even in instances where there has been significant improvement in incidence, prevalence and mortality rates for a specific disease or condition across all groups?
- What are the factors that influence the capacity of individuals or populations to reach their full potential for health and wellbeing?

LIFE COURSE THEORY: KEY CONCEPTS

- Today's experiences and exposures influence tomorrow's health.
- Health trajectories are particularly affected during critical or sensitive periods.
- The broader community environment strongly affects the capacity to be healthy.
- Inequality in health reflects more than genetics or personal choice.

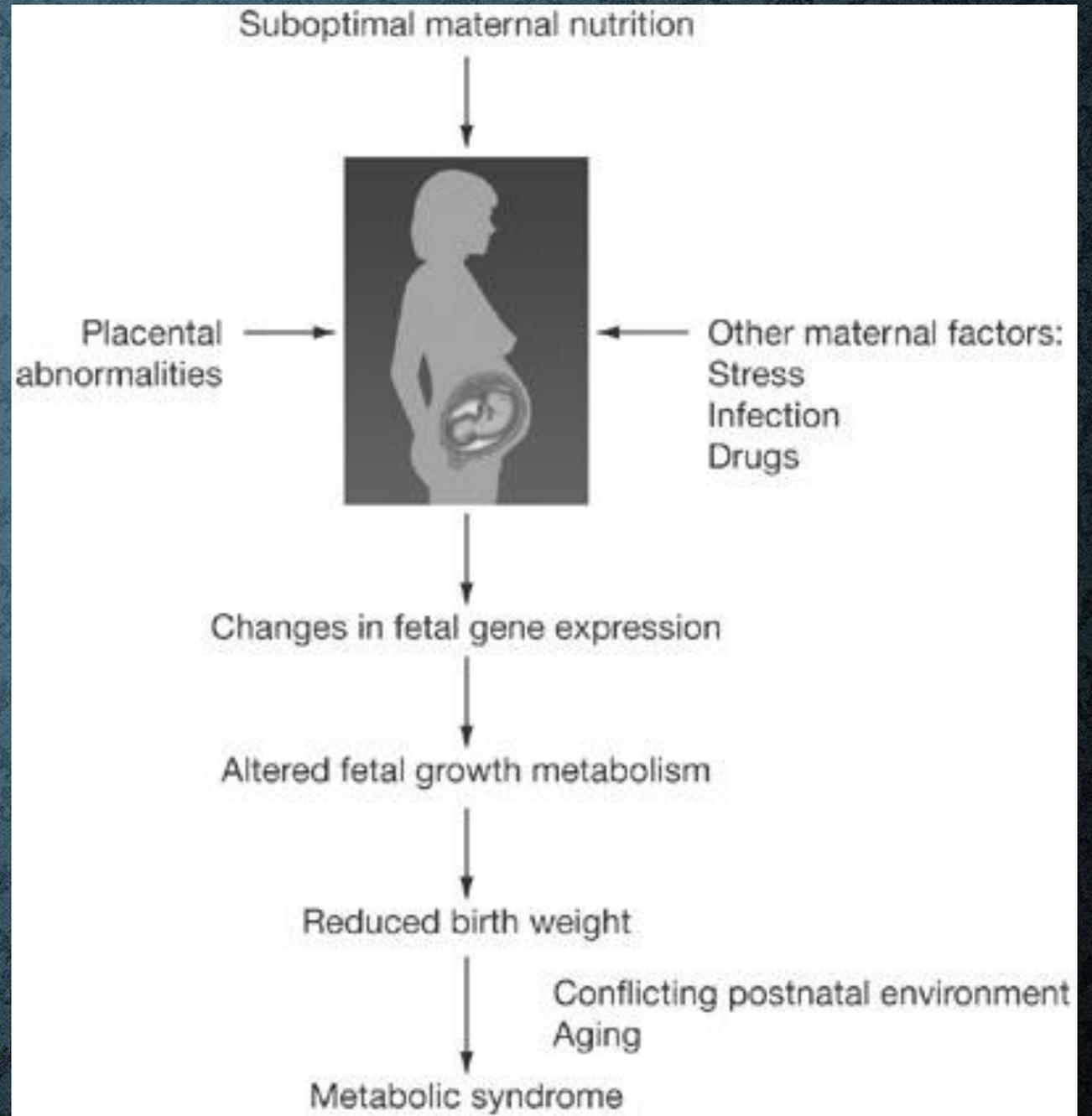
<http://www.hrsa.gov/ourstories/mchb75th/images/rethinkingmch.pdf>



LIFE COURSE THEORY: KEY CONCEPTS

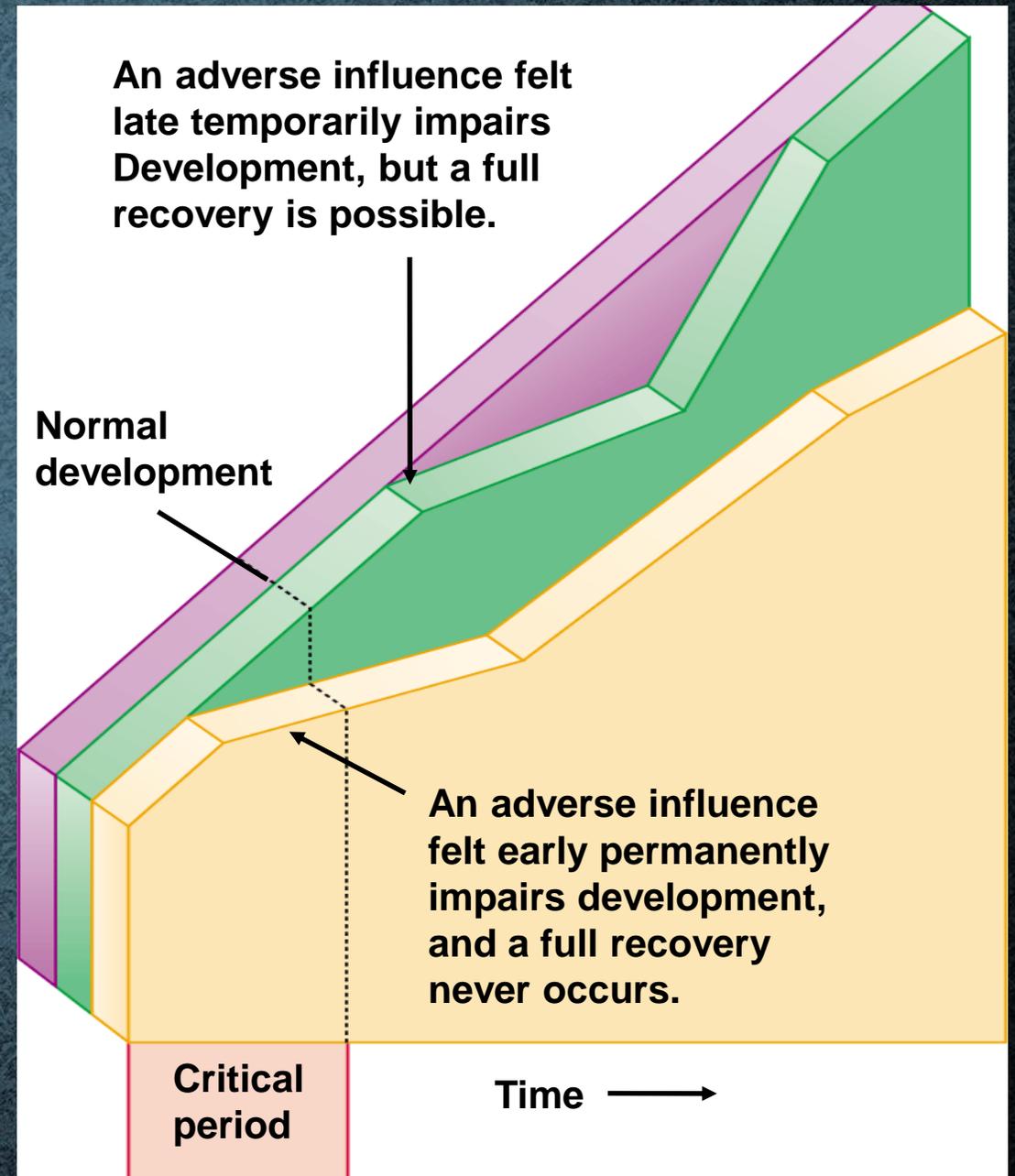
- Early programming
- Critical or sensitive periods
- Pathways or trajectories
- Cumulative impact
- Risk and protective factors

EARLY PROGRAMMING



CRITICAL OR SENSITIVE PERIODS

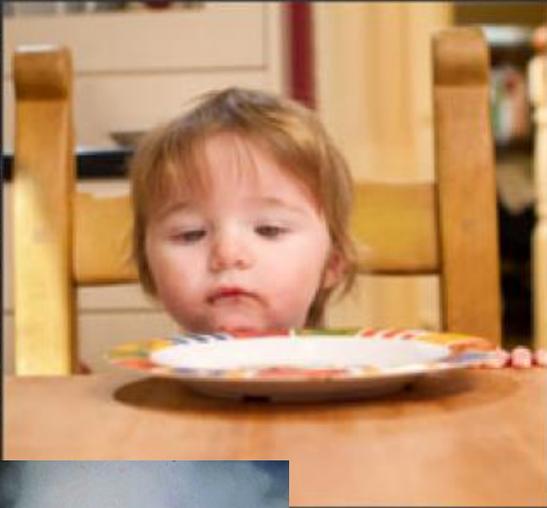
- Folate and neural tube defects
- Head Start
- Adolescent transition to adulthood
 - Teenage pregnancy
 - Drug and alcohol use



PATHWAYS AND TRAJECTORIES CUMULATIVE IMPACT



RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS



CASE EXAMPLE: JUAN

Juan is a 7-year-old Hispanic male who is in the third grade. Juan is social, creative, and smart. Juan has supports with his maternal grandmother, older brother, and school counselor. Juan's father was incarcerated when Juan was five years old and Juan's mother has taken on the role of the family's primary caregiver and income earner. Juan's mom works part-time in the evenings while Juan's older brother takes care of him. Throughout Juan's life course, the family has encountered many financial stressors. The family receives AHCCCS health insurance and nutrition assistance. When Juan's mother was pregnant with Juan, she smoked cigarettes daily and was inconsistent with prenatal care. Juan was born premature and his mother attempted to breastfeed, but without sufficient support, she ended in one month. Juan was diagnosed with asthma at the age of 5 and experienced frequent ear infections. Medical personnel are unsure if this is due to his asthma diagnosis or his mother smoking cigarettes prenatally. Due to Juan's asthma symptoms and recurrent ear infections he has missed several days of school making it hard for him to make up class assignments. When Juan does attend school, he completes his schoolwork on time and maintains good grades.

Race	Hispanic
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Birthweight	4 lbs 1 oz
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Gestational Age	27 weeks
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Parents' Education	Both parents did not complete high school
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Parents' Employment Status	Mother – PT employment Father – incarcerated
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Parents' Marital Status	Unmarried
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Advantage	?
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ADVANTAGE?
Privileged
Neutral
Disadvantaged

LIFE COURSE THEORY: KEY CONCEPTS

- Early programming
- Critical or sensitive periods
- Pathways or trajectories
- Cumulative impact
- Risk and protective factors

SUMMARY

- LCT helps explain health and disease patterns across populations and over time.
- Health trajectories are affected
 - During critical/sensitive periods
 - By our environment
 - By health inequalities beyond genetics and personal choices
- Risk factors and protective factors greatly influence our health and that of our families

REFERENCES

- <http://www.hrsa.gov/ourstories/mchb75th/images/rethinkingmch.pdf>
- <http://www.citymatch.org:8080/lifecoursetoolbox/gameboard.php>
- Settle, P. (2015). *Lecture on Life Course Theory*. Personal Collection of P. Settle, University of Arizona Pediatric Pulmonary Center, Tucson, AZ.