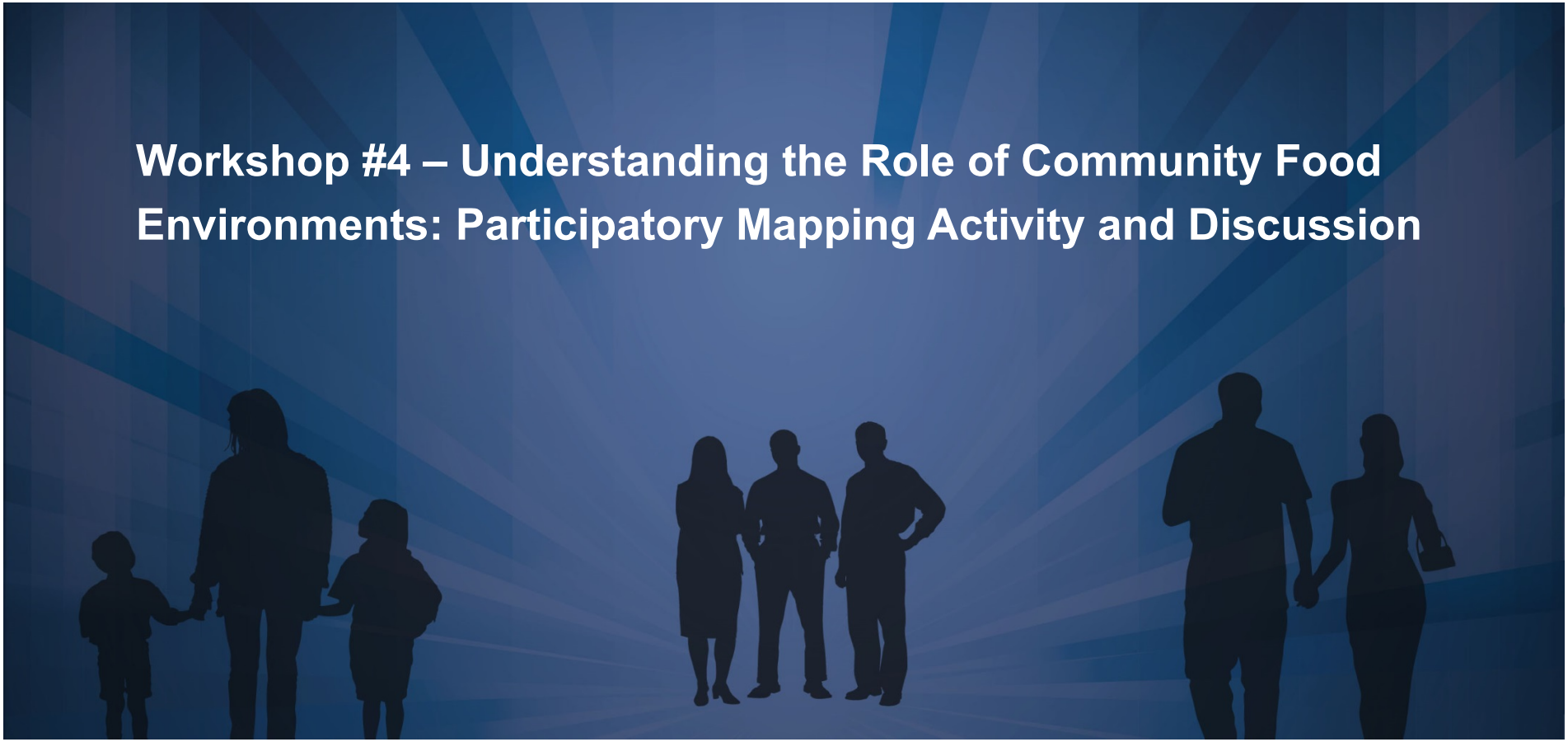
Workshop #4 – Understanding the Role of Community Food Environments: Participatory Mapping Activity and Discussion



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Background

- **Three different types of determinants of food choices**:
  - **Food-related** (biological predispositions and experiences);
  - **Individual** (personal determinants);
  - **Environmental** (physical, sociocultural, economic, political).

Environmental determinants of food choice

- This figure identifies the individual-level determinants and **environmental-level determinants**, as defined as part of the *Common view of supportive environments*:

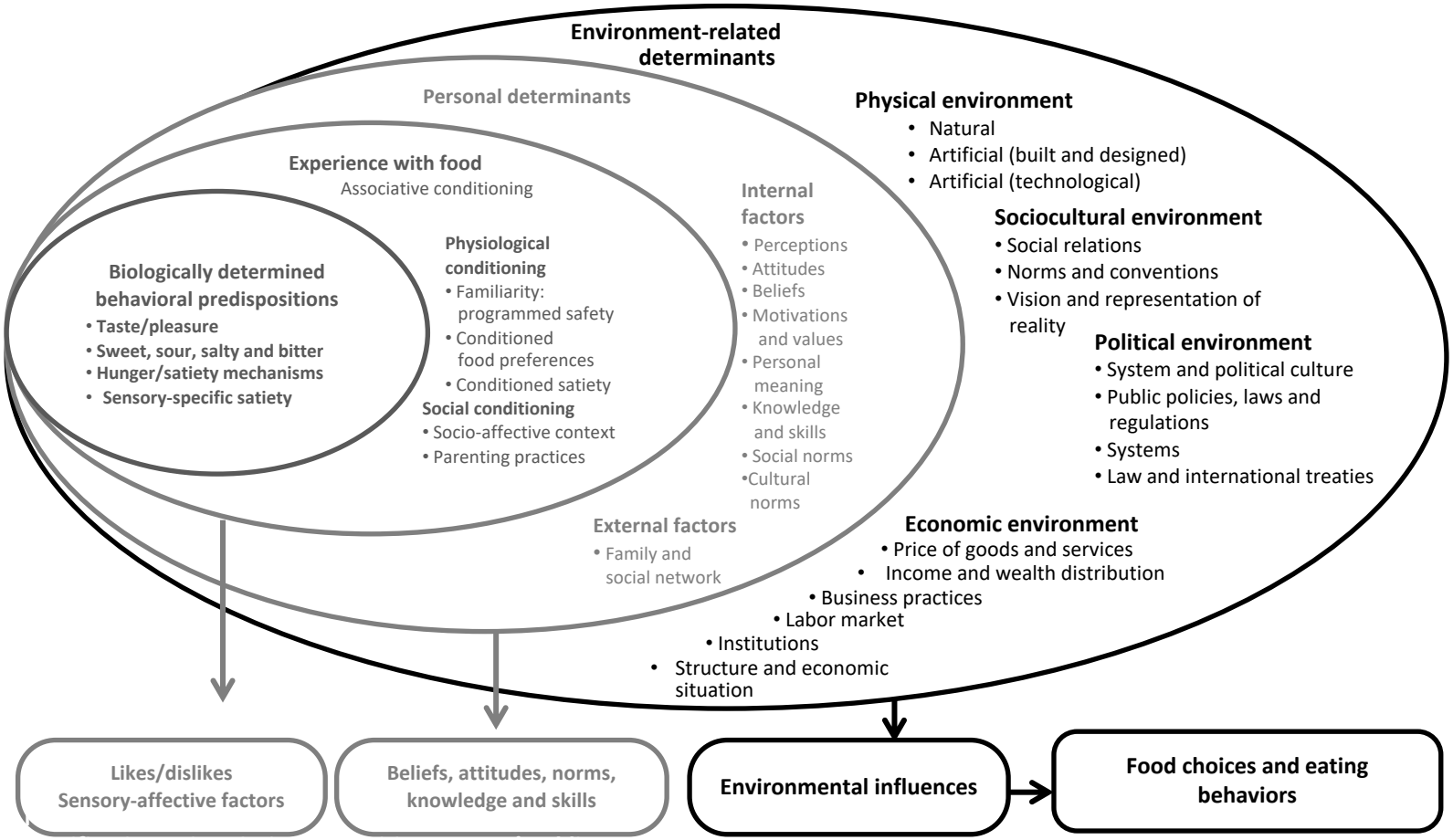

Figure adapted from: Contento IR, 2011 et MSSS, Vision commune des environnements favorables, 2012.

Four aspects of the structural environment

- 1. Availability/accessibility
- 2. Physical structures/characteristics
- 3. Social structures and policies
- 4. Media and cultural messages

Cohen DA, Scribner RA, Farley TA, 2000

1. Availability/accessibility

- Relative access to healthy items vs. unhealthy items
  - Greater accessibility associated with increased purchase and consumption
- Examples?

Cohen DA, Scribner RA, Farley TA, 2000

2. Physical structures/characteristics

- Physical features of buildings/neighborhoods/places that influence behaviors
- Examples?

Cohen DA, Scribner RA, Farley TA, 2000

3. Social structures and policies

- Informal or informal policies that influence behaviors
  - Formal: capital “P” policies – written, developed by governing body/administration
  - Informal: little “p” policies – developed and enforced through norms
- Examples?

Cohen DA, Scribner RA, Farley TA, 2000

4. Media and cultural messages

- Messages that are frequently heard through various media outlets and through cultural practices.
- Youth are more vulnerable to these messages
- Examples?

Cohen DA, Scribner RA, Farley TA, 2000

Are we always aware of our food choices?

- Although individuals' food choices are sometimes intentional (e.g., reading food labels), they may be unintentional (e.g., food packaging).
- They maybe be second nature – engrained practices. Children eat first, men get larger portions, always offer seconds.
- Individuals' automatic responses with regard to food stimuli thus have a significant impact on our behaviors. Nudging.

Examples using images…

Intentional choice

Image source: http://www.0530laval.com/espace_5/bien_lire_les_etiquettes_des_aliments.html

Assessment, planning…

Automatic choice

Image source: http://www.ukgraphicsdesigners.com/food-packaging/

Emotions, impulsiveness…

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www.ucl.ac.uk/behaviour-change

Individuals' *automatic* responses to food stimuli

- Some exposure to food stimuli brings about 'automatic responses' that are absent of conscious cognitive process.
  - For instance, about a third of our calories are eaten outside the home. Foods eaten outside are more likely to be high in calories and fat, and low in nutritional value. These food choices may be in part due to the low availability of foods with a high nutritional value or due to the fact that such decisions (e.g., in restaurants) are likely to be spontaneous, fast and influenced by food stimuli.
- Implications for interventions emphasizing education

Cohen, D.A, et Babey S.H., 2012

In short, food choices and eating behaviors are influenced by a set of determinants related to food, individuals and the environment. Behaviors aren't always conscious and can be greatly influenced by the environment.
In such a context, how is it possible to successfully promote changes health outcomes of individuals and the population?

Public Health

"Structural interventions refer to public health interventions that promote health by altering the structural context within which health is produced and reproduced."

Blankenship K.M., et al, 2006

Framing health problems "as a product of and response to unjust conditions and environments, rather than as a disease rooted solely in individual pathology and responsibility"

Mitchell, 2012

Public Health Intervention

- Assume that:
  - context of behaviors is important
  - Individual choices are constrained by context/environment

Blankenship K.M., et al, 2006

Mapping activity

- Please get in groups of 3-4 people. Each group will get a posterboard and marker set
- Thinking about where you live, work, hang with family:
  - *what influences your food choices in your community?*
- Brainstorm and draw a conceptual map of these influences.