

STRIPED

A PUBLIC HEALTH
INCUBATOR

Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders

A Collaboration of Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Boston Children's Hospital

Newsletter Fall 2021

From the Director



S. Bryn Austin

The early days of the pandemic were disorienting for everyone, STRIPED included. But once we got our bearings, STRIPED scientists and trainees rebounded

quickly to mount new research to uncover how the pandemic is affecting our communities. We also adapted with new ways to connect and engage with likeminded scholars, community members, and policymakers. As always, with every new initiative we took on, our goal was to help inform solutions to improve health, equity, and resilience while advancing eating disorders prevention. Here are just a few highlights you'll find in this newsletter:

- ◆ With the support of a STRIPED research grant, STRIPED Trainee Wanqing Xu worked with Visiting Scholar Andrea López-Cepero and Faculty Josiemer Mattei to carry out what is likely the first study in Puerto Rico documenting the worrisome link between food insecurity and disordered eating behaviors during the pandemic.
- ◆ STRIPED Faculty Tracy Richmond is leading an unprecedented 15-site national study of eating disorders during the

pandemic and the response at children's hospitals across the US. With her study still underway, findings are exposing a frightening surge in eating disorders treatment demand, with at least a doubling of inpatient care requests across the country during the pandemic.

- ◆ Like many of you, soon after the pandemic took hold, we got a crash course in integrating Zoom into almost every aspect of our work and lives. What we didn't anticipate, but soon appreciated, was the way that moving much of our work online made it possible for us to bring together (virtually, that is) the first-ever STRIPED Youth Corps cohort. An ever-growing cadre of capable and determined high school students, these young people are ably amping up the inspiration, engagement, and impact of our mission, bringing their own youth-infused perspectives, life experience, and talents. With all this, plus some really cool lessons from them on the fine art of TikTok videomaking, they are sure to make the coming year for the STRIPED team one for the ages.

With gratitude,

S. Bryn Austin, ScD

What Our Trainees Say About STRIPED



Funmbi Okoya

“ I have been working with a multidisciplinary team to develop the first global policy scan on weight-loss supplement regulation. Thanks to STRIPED, I have been able to leverage my training as a pharmacist and diverse experience to contribute significantly to the project and grow immensely as a project manager. ”



Rachel Plummer

“ With the invaluable guidance of STRIPED mentors, I have been researching weight discrimination and working on advocacy efforts for the passage of legislation to make body size discrimination illegal in Massachusetts. I have learned so much from the STRIPED team and am grateful that they have empowered me to be an advocate for progressive legislation. ”

Visit us on the web!

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Eating Disorders in the Time of COVID-19

The View from Puerto Rico

With the support of a STRIPED research grant, STRIPED Trainee [Wanqing Xu](#) worked with Visiting Scholar [Andrea López-Cepero](#) and Faculty [Josiemer Mattei](#) to carry out what is likely the first study in Puerto Rico showing a worrisome link between food insecurity and disordered eating behaviors during the pandemic. Much work remains to be done to reduce the high rates of both food insecurity and disordered eating in Puerto Rico.



Andrea López-Cepero

The Under Side of Supplement Use

All too aware of the ways unscrupulous actors in the dietary supplements industry seize on crises to peddle their dangerous products, we were not surprised to learn of an uptick in US supplement sales in the pandemic. Concerned about the safety of vulnerable consumers, STRIPED garnered a grant from NIH Office on Dietary Supplements to study changes in use of deceptively marketed supplements during the pandemic. Stay tuned for our findings coming soon.



Treatment Demand Doubles

STRIPED Faculty [Tracy Richmond](#) is leading an unprecedented 15-site national study of eating disorders during the pandemic and the response at children's hospitals across the US. With her [study](#) still underway, findings are exposing a frightening surge in eating disorders treatment demand, with at least a doubling of inpatient care requests across the country during the pandemic.



Tracy Richmond

Voices From the Frontlines

Learn more about the impact of the pandemic on the eating disorders community by watching our [webinar](#) with experts on the frontlines, featuring STRIPED Visiting Scholar [Lesley Williams](#), [Johanna Kandel](#) of [The Alliance](#), and [Monika Ostroff](#) of [Multi-service Eating Disorders Association](#). Hosted by Harvard Interdisciplinary Program in Population Mental Health.



Spotlight on STRIPED Youth Corps!

What happens when you mix passionate youth advocates with STRIPED policy translation know-how? The first ever [STRIPED Youth Corps](#)! Made up of high school students from across the country (virtually, of course), Youth Corps members are eager to bring their energy, creativity, and commitment to create a better world for themselves and their peers.

Scientists have long been stymied by the gap between the evidence that we generate through our research and policy-makers' decisions about which public health causes to champion. But passionate and courageous young people have a unique role to play in bridging this gap with their powerful stories and insights, borne of their lived experience as teens coming of age today. For the STRIPED Youth Corps, policy advocacy has become an inspiring addition to their after-school extracurriculars.



Youth-led statewide survey



Kelsey Wu, Youth Corps

From creating viral advocacy [videos on TikTok](#) to testifying in legislative hearings, the Youth Corps teens are getting firsthand, real-world experience in civic engagement on issues they care deeply about. For one of their hallmark projects, the Youth Corps, along with members of the youth-led organizations [International Socioeconomics Laboratory](#) and [Finnercrun Policy Institute](#), launched [statewide surveys](#) of their peers in California, New York, and Massachusetts to gauge young people's perspectives on efforts to ban the sale of over-the-counter diet pills and muscle-building supplements to minors.

What did they find? These dangerous products are easily accessible, but the overwhelming majority of youth they surveyed want laws passed to prevent sale of these predatory products to young people like themselves. You can bet the STRIPED Youth Corps are going to make their voices heard!

Body Image Insights From Asia

STRIPED Visiting Scholar [Sook Ning Chua](#) is leading our Asia-based study of the myriad challenges to positive body image in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Hong Kong. With the help of experts across Asia, we are investigating how people of all ages are navigating the pervasive toxic pressures that worsen eating disorders, skin shade dissatisfaction, and the use of dangerous predatory products in response. Check out Dr. Chua's fascinating webinar on our preliminary findings [here](#).



Malaysia



Hong Kong



Singapore



Thailand

Tackling Colorism in India



Sketch by Tanvi Bhat

Colorism and skin shade dissatisfaction may be new topics for the eating disorders field, but the combined harm they cause have long been a hard-to-avoid fact of life for many young people of color around the world. Social media has become a near-constant source for shaming messages about larger bodies and darker skin shades, and the analogue world of peers, family, and community are often no respite for young people struggling to hold onto a sense of well-being and body confidence. Just as there is a multi-billion-dollar, global snake-oil industry for diet

pills, there is also a multi-billion-dollar global skin-bleaching industry selling their harmful and deceptive products to children and adults alike.

Working closely with partners in India — Reena Agrawal, Tanvi Bhat, and Kritika Tiwari along with colleagues from the Mumbai community-based research group [Monk Prayogshala](#) — we are piloting our new online course for adolescent medicine and public health professionals working with teens and young adults to promote body confidence and well-being.

Along the way, we've teamed up with London-based [Medical Aid Films](#) to produce a triptych of brief animated films for social media to spread the word about our new online course, while amplifying key messages about body acceptance. Stay tuned for more updates on our e-course, trio of films, and new partnerships in the works in Asia.



STRIPED Faculty

S. Bryn Austin, ScD, Director
S. Jean Emans, MD

Erica Kenney, ScD, MPH
Josiemer Mattei, PhD, MPH, FAHA
Tracy Richmond, MD, MPH

Collaborating Mentors

Jerel P. Calzo, PhD, MPH
Allegra R. Gordon, ScD, MPH
Michael Long, ScD, MPH
Nicole E. Negowetti, JD, MA
Jennifer Pomeranz, JD, MPH
Katherine Record, JD, MPH, MA
Rachel F. Rodgers, PhD, FAED
Mihail Samnaliev, PhD
Kendrin Sonnevile, ScD, RD, LDN
Alvin Tran, ScD, MPH
Davene Wright, PhD

International Expert

Advisory Panel

Debra Franko, PhD
Jess Haines, PhD, MHSc, RD
Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, PhD,
MPH, RD

Susan Paxton, PhD

STRIPED Trainees

Allison Baker
Ariel Beccia
Charmaine Chan
Cecilia (Zhijun) Chen
Cindy Chwa
Hannah Cory
Leahy Ish Shalom
Rakesh Kathiresan
Mary Lee
Alice Lowy
Deepa Manjanatha
Gabe Murchison
Kenny Nguyen
Funmbi Okoya
Rachel Plummer
Tricia Rodriguez
Kelsey Rose
Meera Ruparelia
Meg Salvia
Marlena Skrabak
Samantha Turner
Wanqing Xu

STRIPED Fellows

Suman Ambwani, PhD
Sook Ning Chua, PhD
Nadia Craddock, EdM, PhD
Katelyn Ferreira, MPH
Laura Hart, PhD
Rebecca Hutcheson, MSW
Andrea López-Cepero, MHSN, PhD
Flora Or, MHS, ScD
Amanda Raffoul, MSc, PhD
Iyiola Solanke, PhD
Trine Tetlie Eik-Nes, MSc, PhD
Kuanysh Yergaliyev, MD, DrPH

STRIPED + People Power =

STRATEGIC TRAINING INITIATIVE FOR THE PREVENTION OF EATING DISORDERS

STRIPED ADVOCACY PLAYBOOK

Interested in policy change with potential to prevent eating disorders and promote body confidence? We have the resource for you!

Curating the best of strategies crafted, lessons learned, and research conducted over our many years leading research-to-policy translation for eating disorders prevention, we are proud to introduce the [STRIPED Advocacy Playbook](#). Launched during Eating Disorders Awareness Week in February 2021 and freely available on our website, our Playbook offers step-by-step guidance for advocates, public health professionals, and policymakers to work together to build advocacy campaigns with potential to promote body confidence in young people and prevent eating disorders.

While we can't legislate body confidence, we can change laws to make it harder for children to be targeted by empty promises of underregulated diet pills and muscle-building supplements, sexist and racist digital distortion of body size, shape, and skin shade in ad images, and discrimination based on size and shape. The STRIPED Advocacy Playbook uses tried-and-true strategies to make it easy for community champions to succeed. It is designed for first-time change-makers and veterans alike. From model policy to lawmaker meeting tips, we have resources to help

you plan and manage your campaign for social change and health equity.

Read STRIPED Director Bryn Austin's [welcome](#) to the Playbook, a quick [introduction](#) to the Playbook, a [sneak peak](#) of what's inside, and a [video](#) of our official launch of

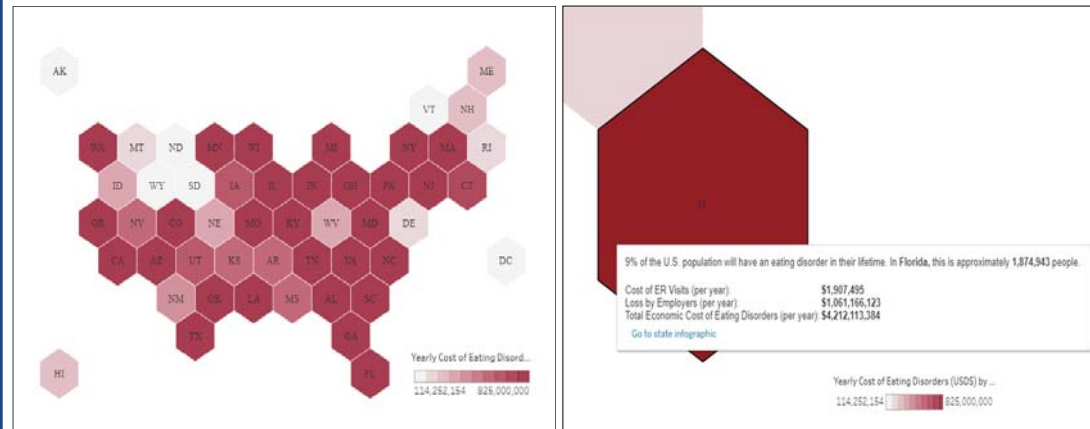
the Playbook.

Also check out the handiwork of the STRIPED Youth Corps' [video showcase](#) of how they are already putting our Playbook into action with their own youth-led advocacy.

Mapping Impact State by State

Ever been curious about the impact of eating disorders in your home state? The STRIPED Advocacy Playbook features an [interactive hex map](#) that outlines the latest state-specific data on eating disorders across the US. If, for example, you click on the hex tile Florida (see below), you'll see the estimated prevalence of eating disorders in the state, along with the yearly costs for ER visits, employers, and the overall economy.

Our Playbook's interactive map and state-specific infographics will be valuable tools for policymakers, public health professionals, and advocates championing evidence-based policies for prevention and treatment access.



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Check us out at: www.hsph.harvard.edu/striped



Newsletter by: S. Bryn Austin, Amanda Raffoul, Monique Santoso & Julia Vitagliano