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The Political Economy Framework

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Political Economy Framework

- The political economy
- Organizations and institutions
- Individuals
- Note similarities to Ecological Model
Political Economy Framework

- Political economy assumes that resources are allocated not on the basis of relative efficiency or merit—but according to power.
- The behavior and dynamics of visible and invisible actors within the health care sector therefore can only be understood in terms of their power and class position in the larger social system.
Political Economy Framework

- Approaches to health problem analysis grounded in a political economy perspective frequently look to the expanding and contracting of the economy historically as a means of contextualizing and helping to explain the related expansion and contracting of perceived health and social problems.
Issues of Interest
Assumption—Communities Are Not Homogeneous

✿ Class

– Determining what is the basis for social influence in the community
  • Land
  • Family history
  • Money
  • Occupation

Continued
Issues of Interest
Assumption—Communities Are Not Homogeneous

Ethnicity

- Different groups co-existing, aware of each other
- Aware of own position relative to others
- Power relations, prejudices, exploitation
Issues of Interest
Assumption—Communities Are Not Homogeneous

- Gender
  - Roles
  - Power
  - Economic access
  - Decision making

- Implies community action approach to change
CPHs Held Mock Parliaments to Address Political Participation Needs

Source: The Basics
Levels of Power

- **Situational power**
  - Individual’s ability to make concrete decisions within existing “rules of the game”

- **Organizational power**
  - Ability to define the “rules of the game” by elites
Levels of Power

- Systemic (structural) power
  - The way in which the structure of the polity and economy favors certain interests without recourse to any conscious decisions
  - Ability to establish the context of “the game”
    - Issues, approaches, resources
Political Economy Issues
Conflict, Hidden Communities, Community Action

- **Guinea worm**
  - Neglected disease of neglected people

- **AIDS**
  - “Marginalized” groups in industrial countries
  - “Marginalized” countries affected
Discussion of AIDS Has Often Been Silenced
Political Economy Issues
Conflict, Hidden Communities, Community Action

✱ Alcohol and drug abuse
  – Advertising aimed at inner cities and youth
  – Alcoholism is now a “disease”
  – Corporations distance themselves

Continued
Political Economy Issues
Conflict, Hidden Communities, Community Action

Nutrition

- Political economy model encourages us to look at how policy and political decisions affect health choices
Urban transport exemplifies political economy issues
Adolescent Pregnancy and Reproductive Health

*In Rural Transkei*

- 11% of women were ever-married by age of 19 years
- 43% have had children
- For more than a century, black men were recruited to work in cities
Adolescent Pregnancy and Reproductive Health

_In Rural Transkei_

- By law, women and children had to remain in rural areas
- Policy promoted a norm of unmarried women
- General acceptance of child-bearing outside marital unions