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JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG
SCHOOL *of* PUBLIC HEALTH

The Political Economy Framework

William R. Brieger, MPH, CHES, DrPh
Johns Hopkins University

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

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



Source: The Basics

*CPHs Held Mock Parliaments
to Address Political Participation Needs*

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

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