

5th National Community health Nurses Conference

*The Time is now:
Influence, Impact, Outcomes*

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Sociopolitical Knowledge and Skills to Achieve Health Equity

Purpose:

To illustrate a strategy to identify problematic effects of public policy that contribute to health inequity

Goal:

To contribute to the skills set of CHN necessary for advocacy toward health equity

Background

- Nursing is a moral practice and takes place within a social, economic, cultural and political context
- Nurses' Obligation to Participate in Sociopolitical Activities (Ballou, 2000; Reimer Kirkheimer & Browne, 2006)
Examples: Code of Ethics, Competencies, Social Justice Gauge, BScN Curriculum
- Focus on sociopolitical advocacy skills

Lens to view politics and political ideology

- Importance of welfare state typology or **public policy** (Distribution of resources)
- Prevailing neo-liberal/conservative approaches favor the role of the market in allocating resources resulting in:
 - **income inequalities**
 - **housing crisis**
 - **crisis in food security**
 - **environmental degradation**

CHN Practice: Privilege and Responsibility

- Privilege:

Prolonged engagement with the community

Position of trust

Enables data collection

- Responsibility:

Effective advocacy for health equity

Critical data analysis and action

One example...

- Urban environmental health inequity:

Critical questions

look for patterns

identify related public policy

“Prolonged urban ethnography combined context specific data with personal narratives that indicated health inequity producing effects of a specific public policy.”

Lack of regulated childcare

Now what?

- Connect findings to public policies (NS Day Care Act)
- Institutional Ethnography to guide analysis of public policy:
- What are the underlying assumptions of an existing policy or of a policy void?
- Re-visit political ideologies of how society distributes its resources
- In whose interest are they?

...back to the example

- The *Day Care Act* of Nova Scotia (R.S., c. 120 s. 1. (1989))
 - Province does not provide day care
 - *Day Care Act* is Regulatory only
 - Focus is on licensing
 - Province relies on private market for service
 - Equal access not ensured
 - Mothers are denied same access to labor market as non-mothering parents=social exclusion

Inequity producing effect

- Systemic social exclusion is embedded in neo-liberal welfare states as their political ideology is based on a concept of “neutrality of the private market”
- Policy does not account for different social reality of low-income mothers (class, gender, race)

Goal of social justice

- “to eliminate inequitable differences that systematically favor advantaged social groups” (Hofrichter, 2003, p. 13)

Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health (WHO, 2008)

Three principles of action

1. Improve daily living conditions
2. Tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money, and resources
3. Measure and understand the problem and assess the impact of action

The Time is Now

Thank you

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