



# Capitalism as a Systemic Determinant of Health

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# Political Economy of Health Promotion

- Social Democratic and Liberal countries both make public commitments toward prerequisites of health.
- “Despite extensive rhetoric concerning the prerequisites of health, nations identified as liberal welfare states do a rather poor job of meeting these goals and show evidence of adverse health outcomes.”

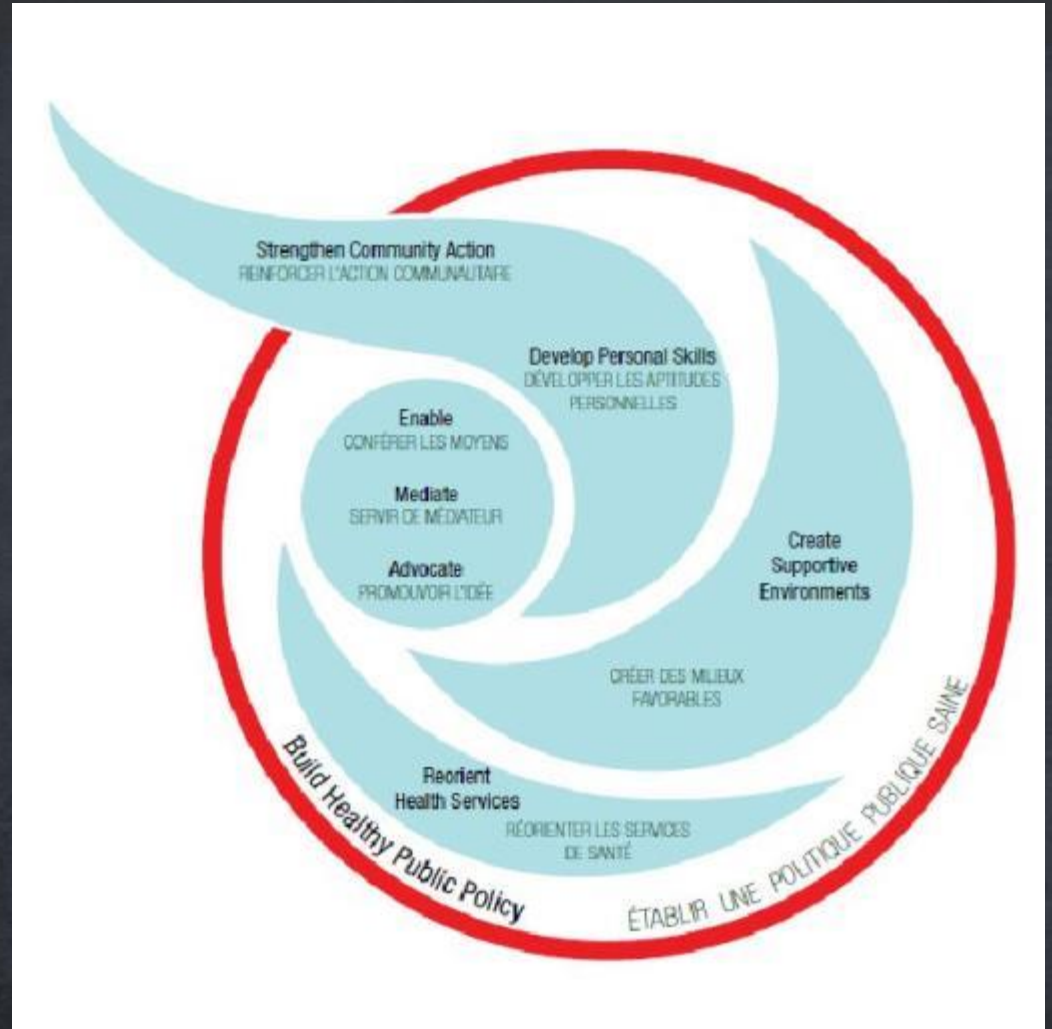
## Health Promotion

“the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health.”

*Enable \* Mediate \* Advocate*

Build Health Public Policy  
Strengthen Community Action  
Create Supportive Environments  
Develop Personal Skills  
Reorient Health Services

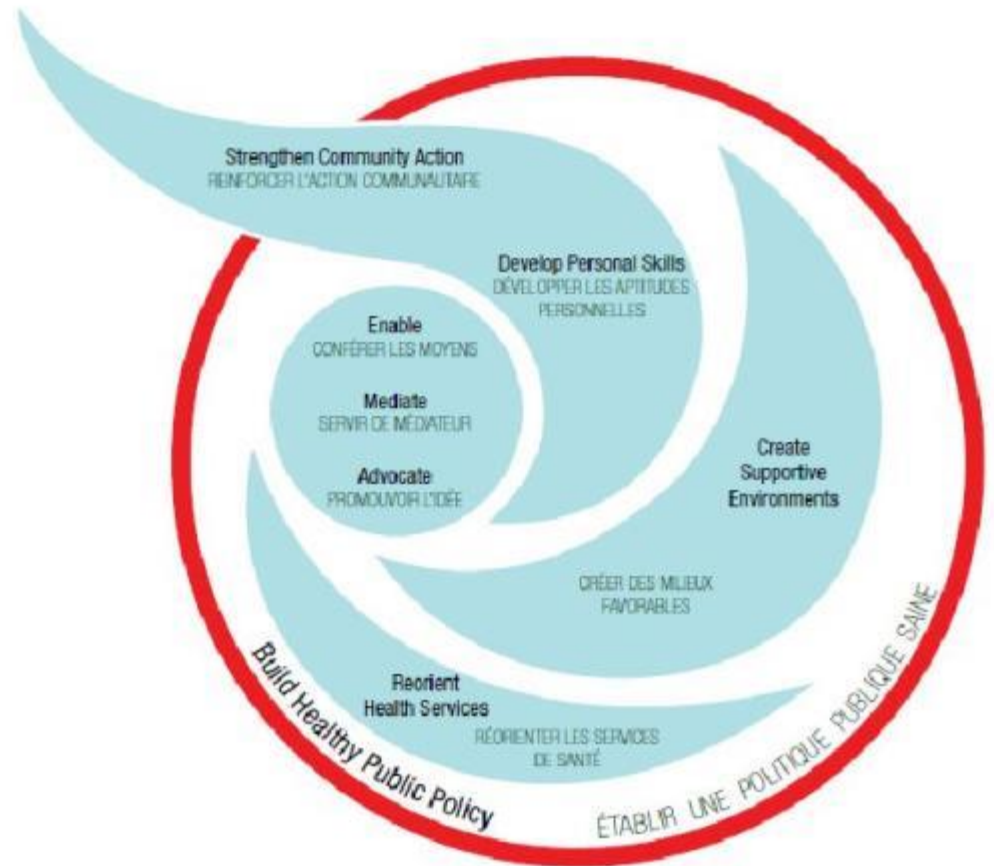
## Health Promotion Logo



## Prerequisites of Health

Peace  
Shelter  
Education  
Food  
Income  
Stable Eco-System  
Sustainable Resources  
Social Justice & Equity

## Health Promotion ...





# **Economy Matters**

# Capitalism Defined

- Capitalism is the production of goods and services for the profit of those who own the means by which they are produced. In capitalist societies, the major means of production are private

Has Socialism Failed? An Analysis of Health Indicators under Capitalism  
and Socialism

Vicente Navarro

Science & Society, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Spring, 1993), pp. 6-30

# Social Murder Definition

- The knowing causing of the inevitable premature death of members of an oppressed class by deliberately and structurally exposing them to potentially lethal conditions.

# Social Murder Quote

- When one individual inflicts bodily injury upon another, such injury that death results, we call that deed manslaughter; when the assailant knew in advance that the injury would be fatal, we call this deed murder. But when society places hundreds of proletarians in such a position that they inevitably meet a too early and an unnatural death, one which is quite as much a death by violence as that by the sword or the bullet; when it deprives thousands of the necessities of life, places them under conditions in which they cannot live - forces them ... to remain in such conditions until that death ensues which is the inevitable consequence - knows that these thousands of victims must perish, and yet permits these conditions to remain, its deed is murder just as surely as the deed of the single individual ...

Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845 [1967]), p. 126  
(Panther Press)



# Research on income & social equity

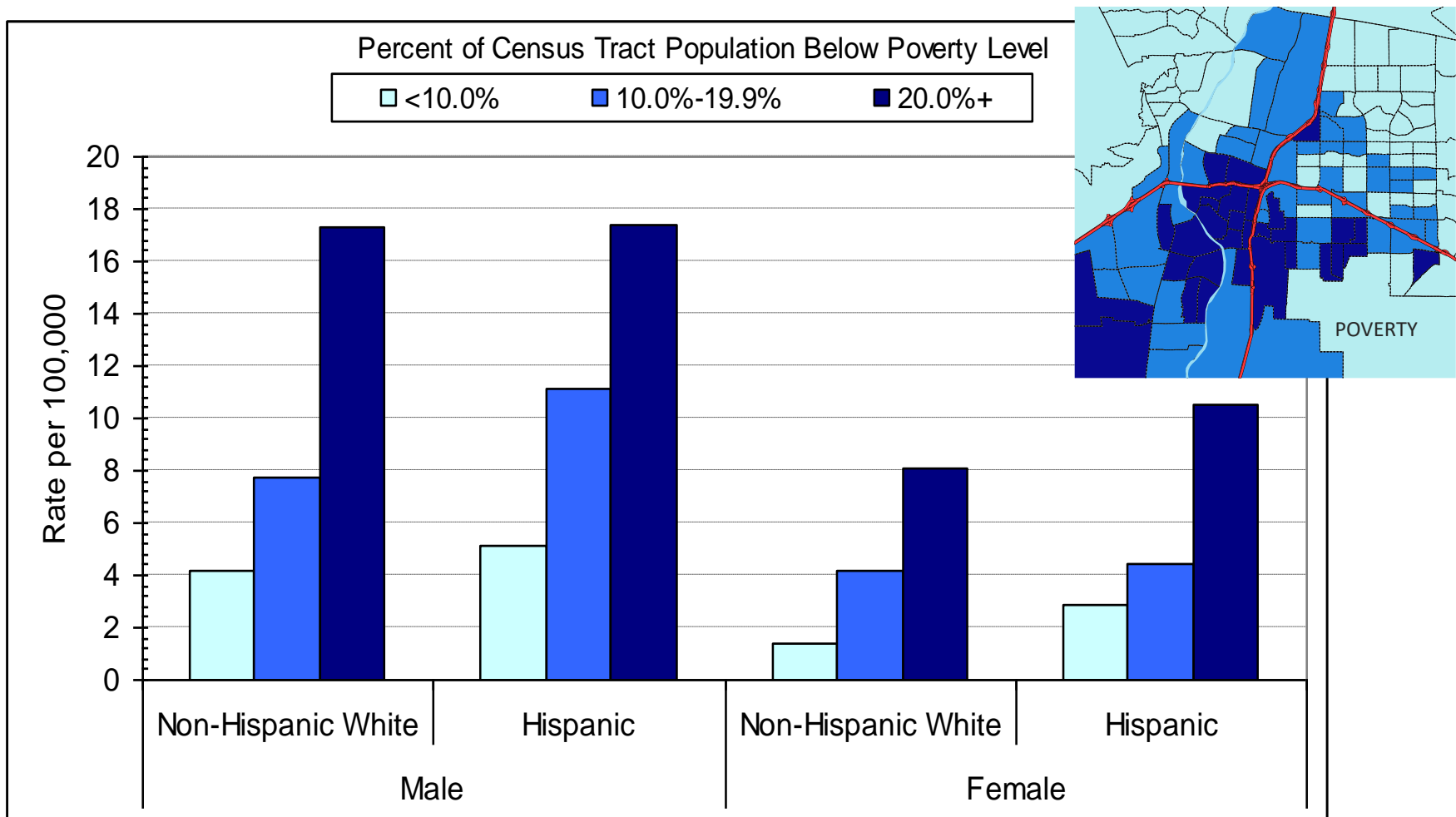
Approximately **119,000 deaths** in the U.S. were attributable to income inequality.

They also modeled for **low education, racial segregation, low-social support, individual poverty, and area-level poverty.**

Galea, et al, 2010, AJPH

# DIABETES MORTALITY – UNDER 65 YEARS

Age-Adjusted Death Rates, Bernalillo County, 2001-2005



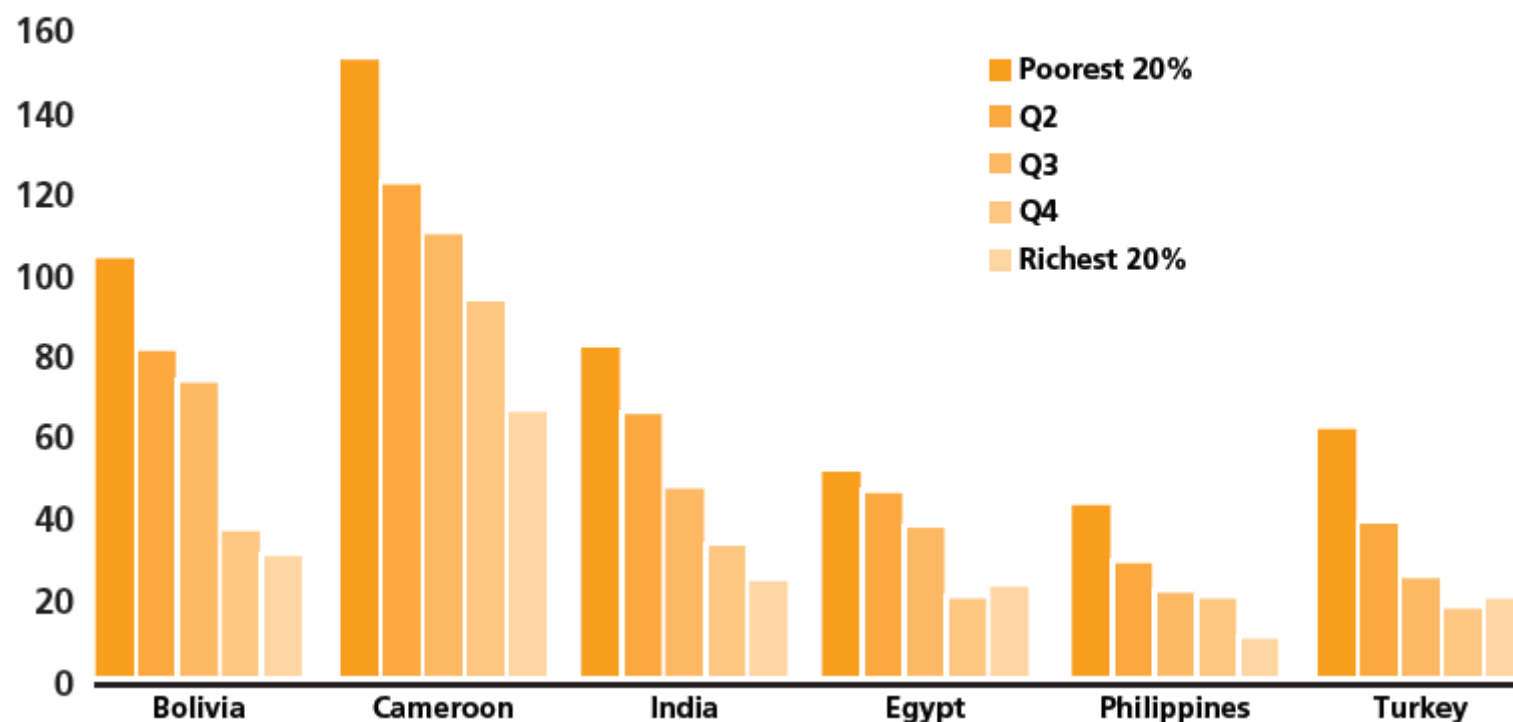
W. ATHAS, PLACE MATTERS – ABC HEAT

Source: NMDOH, BVRHS

BERNALILLO COUNTY PLACE MATTERS TEAM - - - - - HEALTH EQUITY ASSESSMENT TOOL  
NOW NMCDC

# Social Gradient of Health

Figure 1 Under-five mortality rates per 1000 live births by urban wealth quintiles in selected countries



WHO, Urban HEART, 2010

# Capitalism vs Socialism

- o In the underdeveloped world, socialist forces and regimes have, more frequently than not, made greater improvements in health and social indicators than have capitalist forces and regimes. In the developed world, countries with strong socialist forces have been able to improve health conditions better than those countries without, or with weak, socialist forces.

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# **Politics Matters**

# Politics Matters

- For every 1 percent increase in votes for Social Democratic Parties (Labor, Social Democrat, Socialist), infant mortality declined 0.15 per 1,000 live births.
- For every 1 percent increase in population participation, infant mortality declined 0.13 per 1,000 live births.

# Election Systems Matters

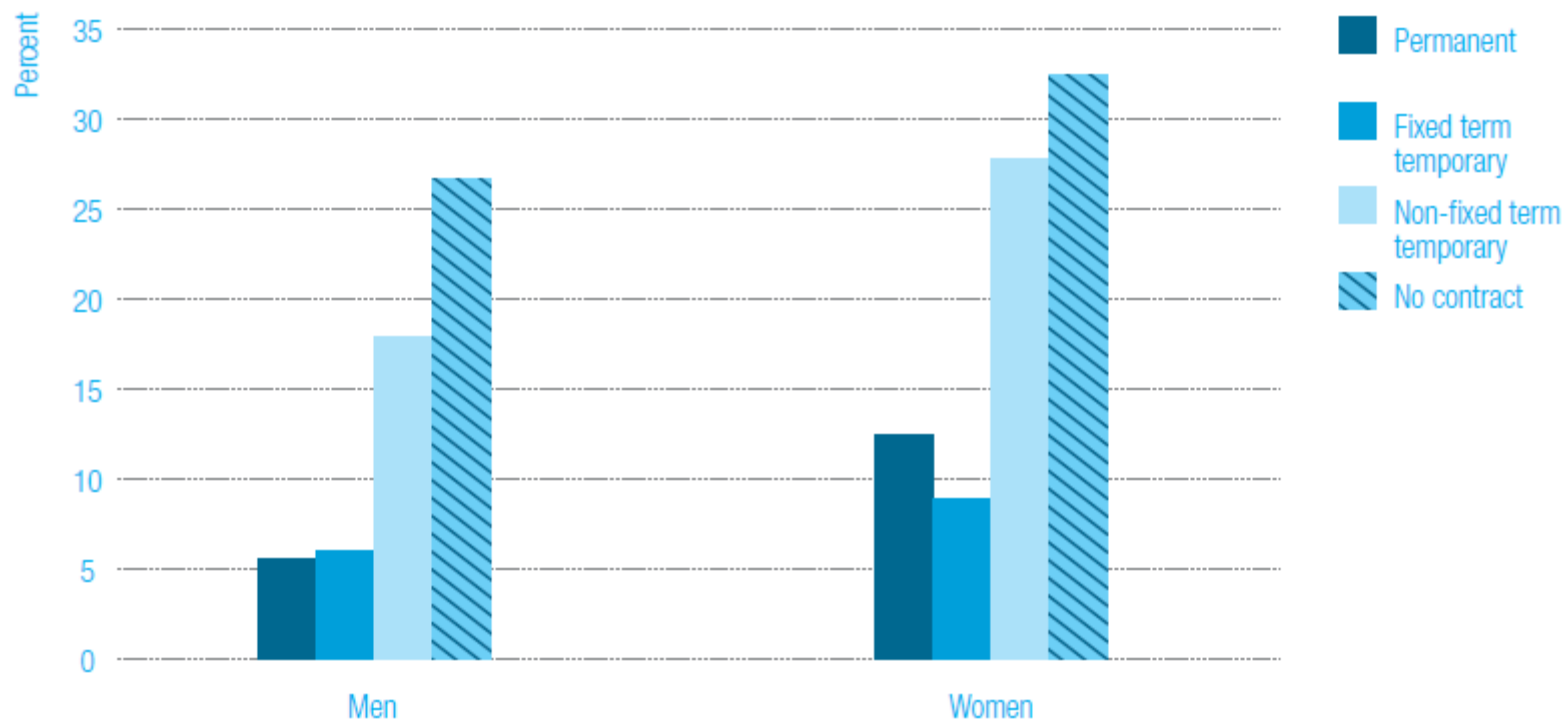
- Most western political systems use some form of proportional representation system with more than two parties.
- Countries with proportional representation typically reduce income inequities as opposed to those using (essentially) two-party majority rule.

# Unions Matter

- “...countries with weaker labor movements and social democratic parties and stronger capitalist classes, such as the liberal Anglo-Saxon countries, have had a weaker commitment to redistributive policies and worse health indicators.”



## Prevalence of poor mental health among manual workers in Spain by type of contract.



Source: Artazcoz et al., 2005

# Privatized politics

- The current state of health care reform in the United States reveals the enormous limitations of **democracy** in this country, unparalleled in the western world. Why is there such a large gap between what people want from their representatives in Congress – including **universal access to health care as a matter of right** – and what they get?

Navarro, 2010

Proportional  
Representation



Left Politics



Welfare  
Generosity



Poverty  
Alleviation &  
Income Equity



# Politics gives us policies

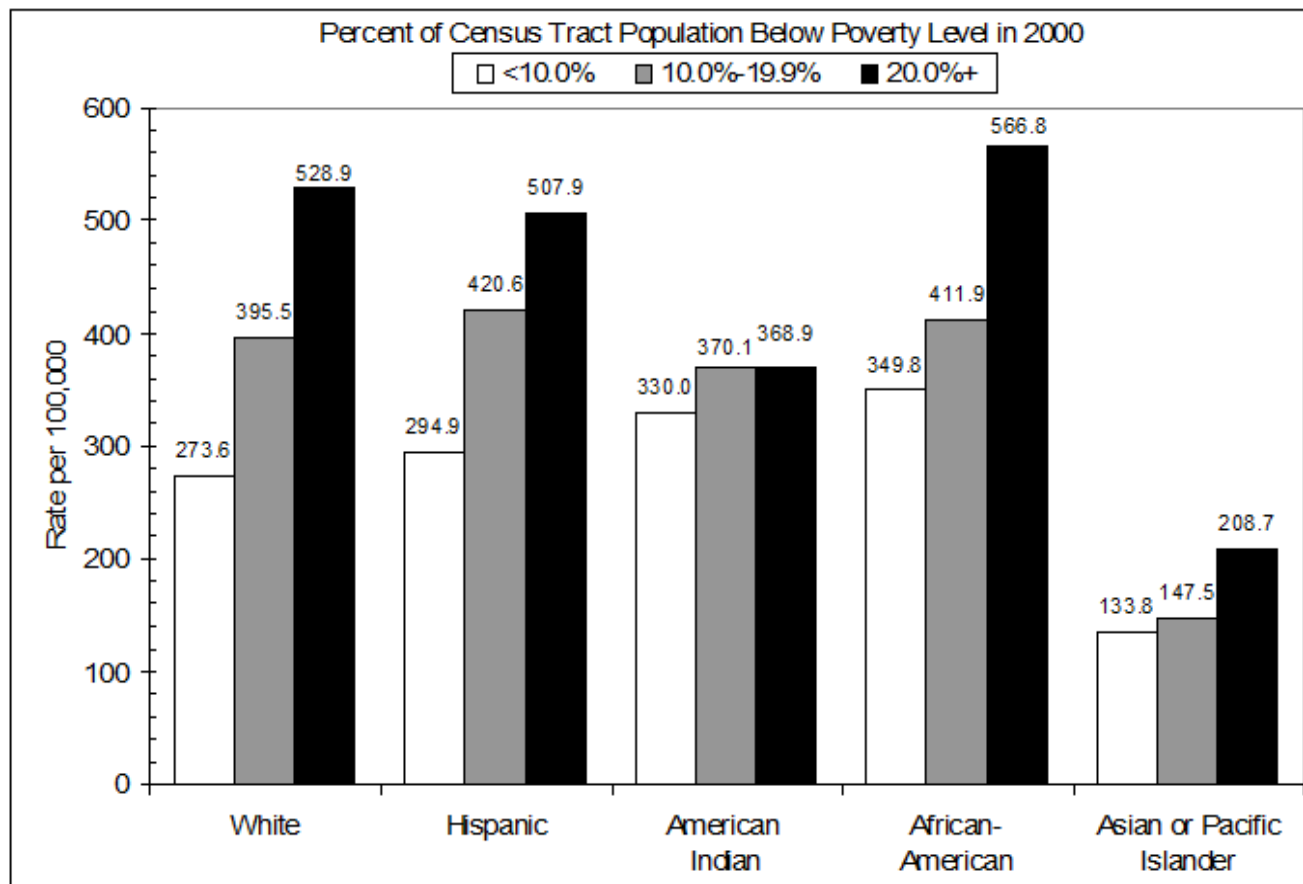
**“Politics”**

**Policy**



**Party**

**Outcome**

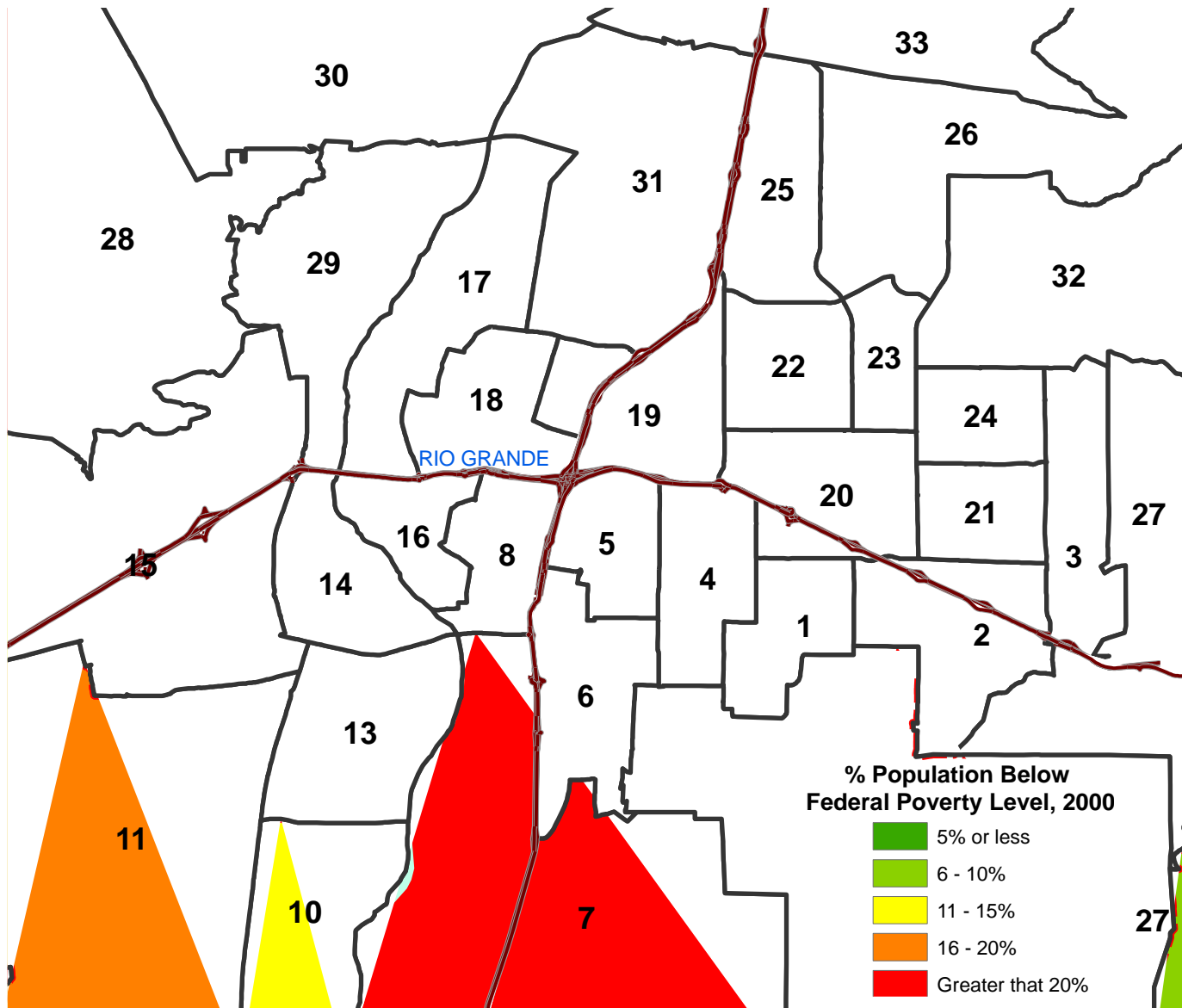


## ALL CAUSES OF MORTALITY COMBINED

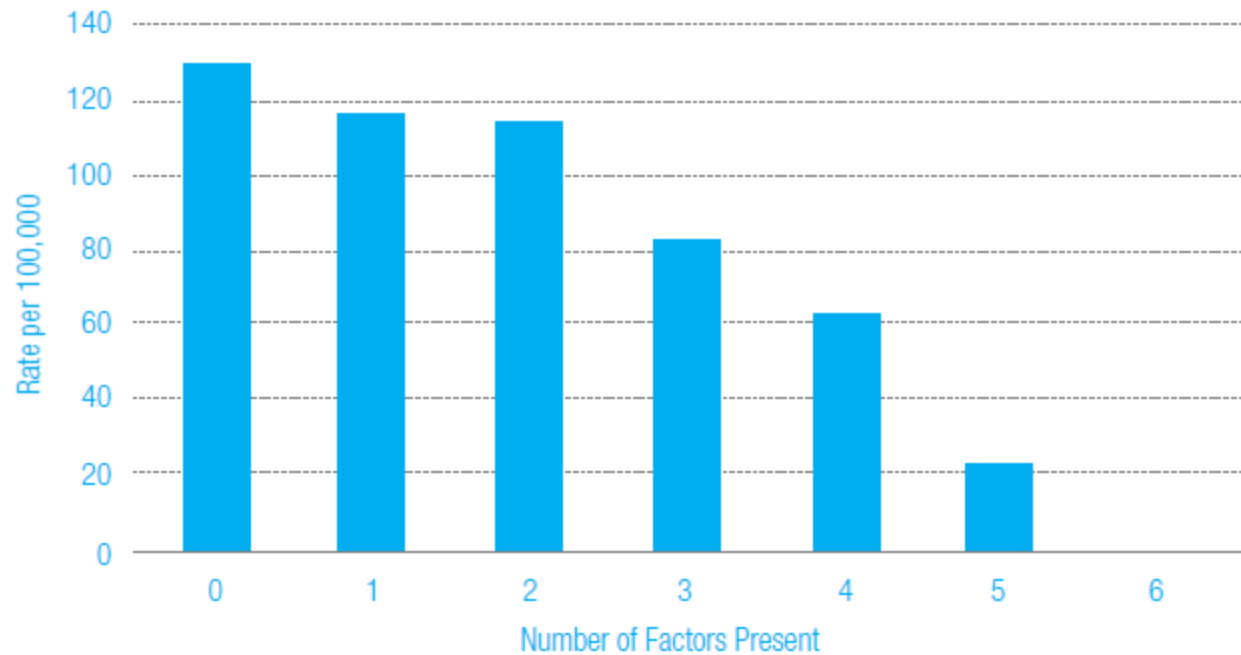
Average Annual Age-Adjusted Death Rates in Persons < 75 Years By Race/Ethnicity, and Poverty Level  
Bernalillo County, 1996-2005

Source - Area Socioeconomic Variations in Select Mortality Outcomes: Bernalillo County, 1996-2005

Prepared By: William F. Athas Ph.D. & Thomas N. Scharmen, M.A., M.P.H.



**Figure 14.4** First Nations youth suicide rates, by cultural continuity factors.



Proxy measure of cultural continuity factors: land claims, self-government, education services, police and fire services, health services, and cultural facilities.

Reprinted, with permission of the publisher, from Chandler & Lalonde (1998).

# Research on racial equity

**Achieving equity may do up to 5 times more for health** than perfecting the technology of care.

Woolf, et al, 2004



# Research on educational equity

Giving everyone the health outcomes of the college educated may **save 8 times as many lives** as would investment in medical advances.

Woolf, et al, 2007

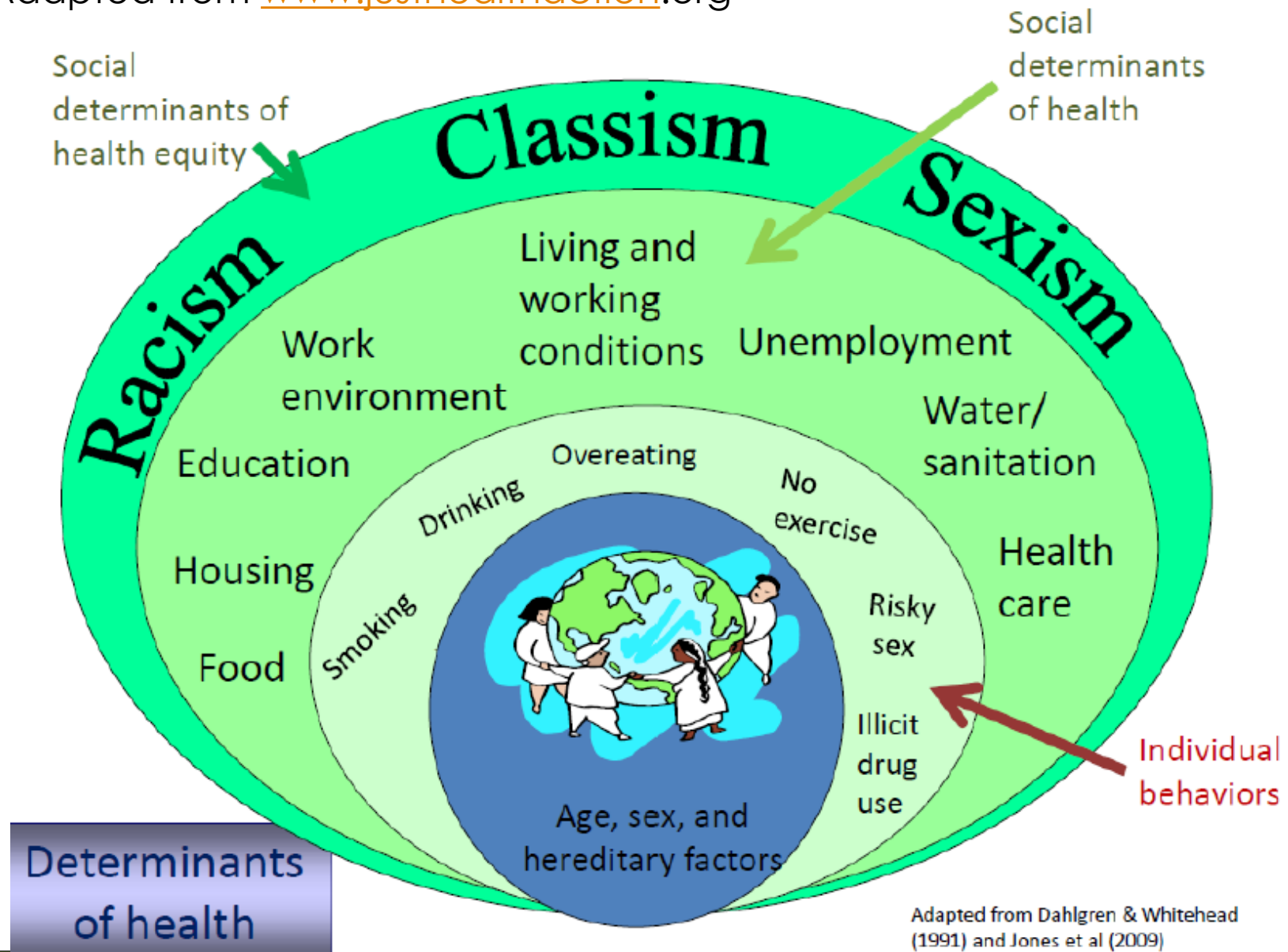
# Poverty impacts lifelong health

Children growing up in relative poverty tend to experience more:

- Stomach, liver and lung cancer
- Diabetes
- Cardiovascular disease
- Homicide
- Unintentional injuries
- Cirrhosis
- And greater disability related to various diseases

Bloch, 2010

Adapted from [www.justhealthaction.org](http://www.justhealthaction.org)



# What are health enhancing policies?

- Living wage – or any increase in minimum wage
- Affordable housing
- Increased urban recreational space
- Fair taxation system
- Walkable environment
- Public transportation

○ **What else?**



# Other health enhancing policies...

- Voter registration
- Unionization policies
- Education expenditures
- Pay equity
- Child care
- Proportional representation





# Thank You!

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