

Building and Breaking Power

Jamila Michener

Associate Professor

Cornell University

Jonathan Heller

Senior Health Equity Fellow

University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute

Moderator:

Sheri Johnson

Director

University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute

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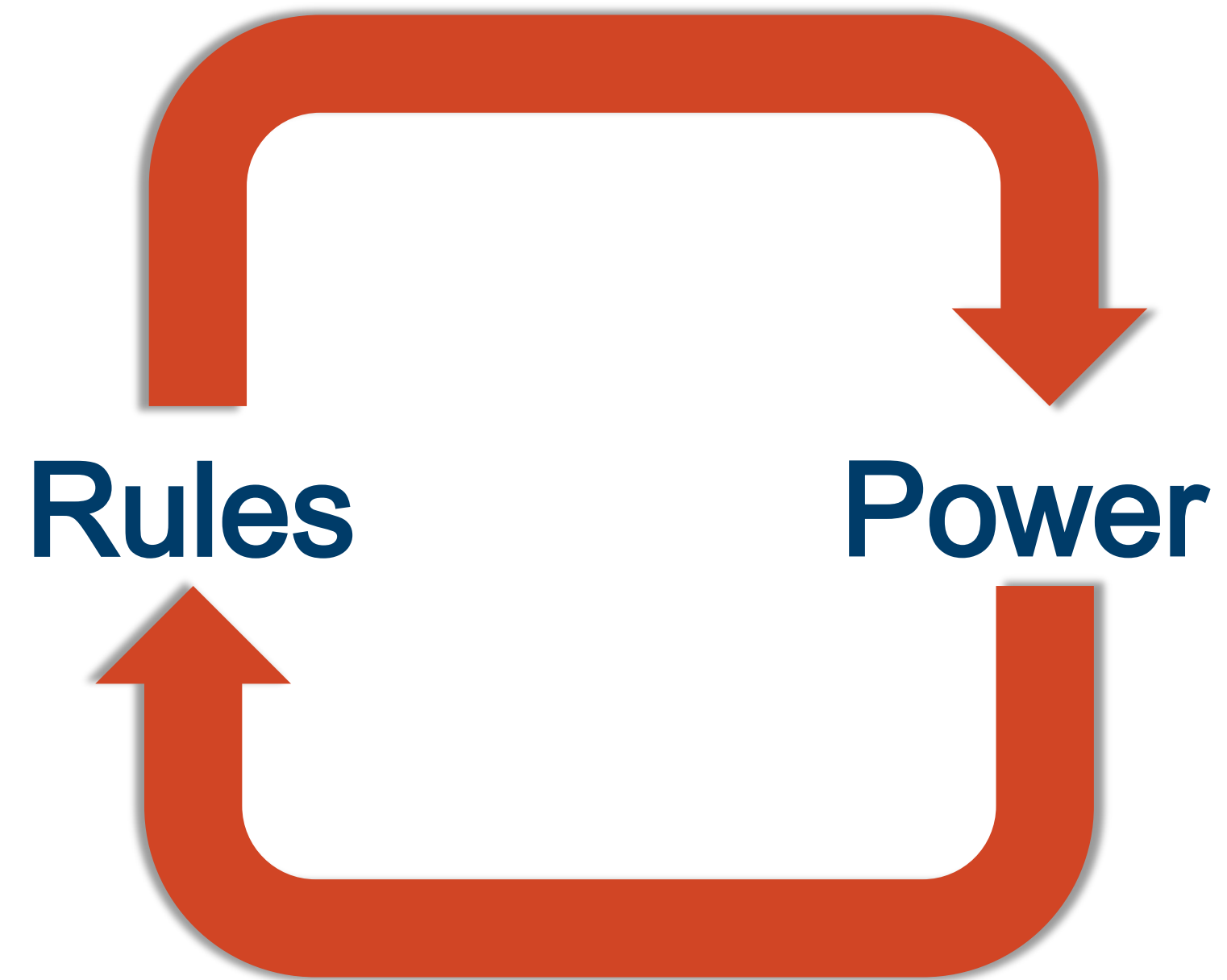
Structural determinants of health

The StrDOH are:

1. The written and unwritten rules that create, maintain, or eliminate durable and hierarchical patterns of advantage between socially constructed groups in the conditions that affect health.
2. The manifestation of power relations in that people and groups with more power based on current social structures work to maintain their advantage by reinforcing or modifying these rules.

Which written and unwritten rules?

- Values, beliefs, worldviews, culture and norms
- Governance
- Laws, policies, regulations and budgets
- Institutional practices



Implications for public health

To advance health equity



Change community conditions (Social DOH)



Transform the written and unwritten rules



Shift power relations:
Build community power
Break power of those who maintain status quo

What is Power?

The capacity of individuals, groups, and communities to influence the social and structural conditions that affect them and others (Rosino 2016, Michener 2023a).

What is Power?

power to



“getting things done”

Capacity to mobilise resources to achieve specific goals.

Includes intentionally effecting outcomes.

power over



“forcing & dominating”

Force/impede others to do what they would otherwise (not) do

Includes domination, dependency, oppression & exploitation

Visible, hidden, invisible or unconscious.

power with



“acting in concert”

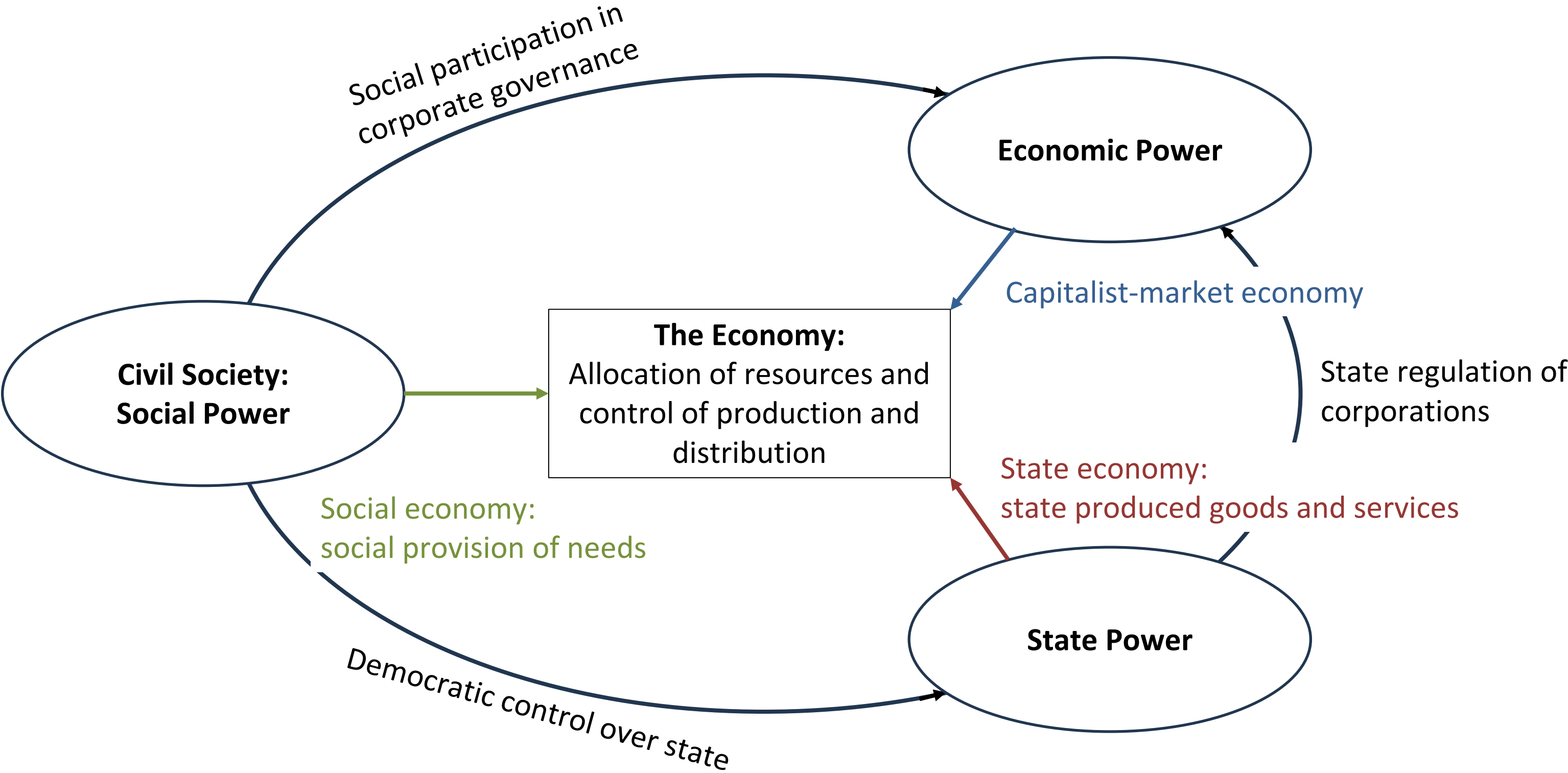
Collective capacity to collaborate to achieve common goals

Includes co-action and empowerment as a goal in itself.

Illustrations: Maria Fraaije

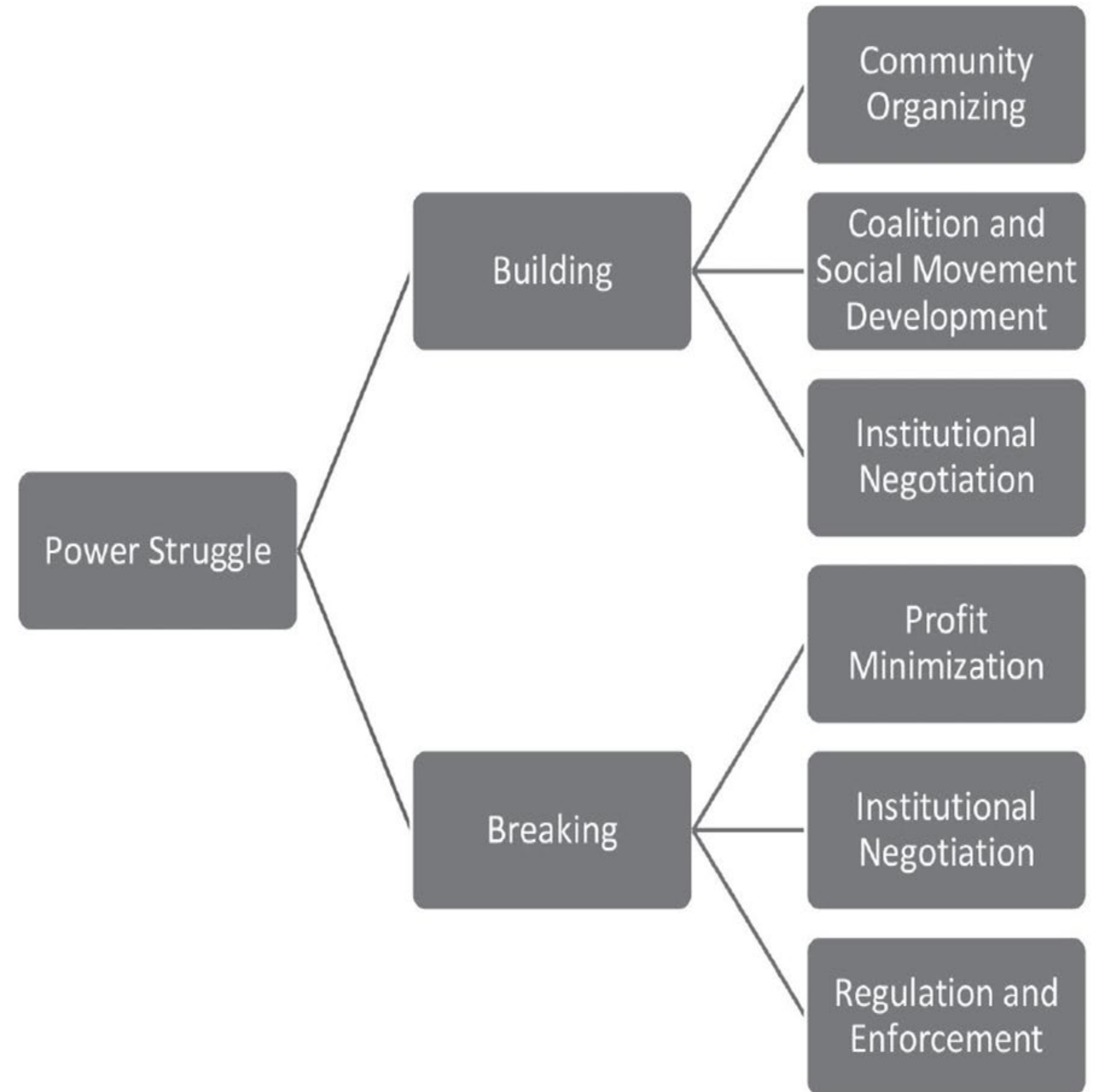
Power to, power over and power with (based on Allen ([1998](#)), Partzsch ([2017](#)))

Social Empowerment over the Economy



“This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one...but it must be a struggle. **Power concedes nothing without a demand.** It never has and it never will.”

—Frederick Douglass



Defining Community Organizing

“the processes by which people who have a common identity or purpose unite...

to build relationships, identify shared issues, collectively analyze those issues to understand structural injustices, develop collective goals based on that analysis, and implement strategies and tactics to reach those goals...

including: developing leadership skills, activating members for direct action and campaigning, expanding group membership, and building power among the group and broader community to influence decisions, set agendas, and shift worldviews.”

Community Organizing – Central Concepts

	Through organizing, community members...
Agency and power	Increase their sense of control over their own lives individually and, collectively, expand their power to create the changes they seek
Critical consciousness	Increase their ability to reflect critically and hold complexity through dialogue and action, including recognizing the structural roots of individual struggles and how the individual problems they face are collective struggles
Base building	Expand the number of people directly impacted by problems in their community who are in relationship with one another and involved in collective action
Community capacity	Build their capacity to identify, mobilize, and solve problems in their community and take leadership in doing so
Develop leadership	Shift from private shame about the problems they face to a public stance, and build their leadership to solve these problems
Issue selection	Identify specific change targets that solve their problems, unify their base, and build power
Campaigns and initiatives	Make demands and take actions to advance concrete change related to the issues they select, building their power and putting their leadership skills into action
Forming an organization	Coalesce their power and make it durable through the formation of an organization driven by its base

Breaking Power

Minimizing Profits: Forging politics and designing policy in ways that erode the revenue generated by health inequity and limit the profits that can be gained from it.

Institutional Negotiation: Surfacing economic interests that undermine health equity, tracing their political investments, identifying the institutional processes through which they most frequently operate, and styming those processes.

Regulation and Enforcement: reorienting regulatory agencies such that they (1) have a closer relationships and mechanisms of accountability to the populations and communities most directly affected by regulatory decisions and (2) are held strictly accountable for their relationships to elite economic actors.

Backup slides

StrDOH enshrine and encode structural oppression

Structural Determinant	Structural Oppression
Values, beliefs, worldviews, culture, and norms	Whiteness as superior Men as superior Try hard enough and you can make it
Governance	Weak enforcement of environmental regulations Inadequate protection from gender - based violence Those with wealth have more say
Laws, policies, regulations, and budgets	Limits on voter participation Inadequate family leave Regressive taxation
Institutional practices	Over - policing Gender - based pay discrimination Misclassification of jobs