

Some Conceptual Issues concerning Health and Human Rights
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Many of the sociological studies concerned with poverty and health have at times viewed equity and human rights as two (and often unrelated) abstract concepts with little practical application. As a result the deep, mutually impacting and comprehensive relationship between health, equity and human rights has not been examined systematically. Sociological analysis of the concepts of poverty, equity, and human rights in relation to health and to each other unequivocally demonstrates that they are not only linked to each other in pragmatic world, but also are extremely significant in furthering research and application in the area of public health.

Equity and human rights perspectives can contribute concretely to health institutions' efforts to tackle poverty and health, and focusing on poverty is essential to operationalizing those commitments. Both equity and human rights principles dictate the necessity to strive for equal opportunity for health for groups of people who have suffered marginalization or discrimination. Health institutions can deal with poverty and health within a framework encompassing equity and human rights concerns in five general ways: (1) institutionalizing the systematic and routine application of equity and human rights perspectives to all health sector actions; (2) strengthening and extending the public health functions, other than health care, that create the conditions necessary for health; (3) implementing equitable health care financing, which should help reduce poverty while increasing access for the poor; (4) ensuring that health services respond effectively to the major causes of preventable ill-health among the poor and disadvantaged; and (5) monitoring, advocating and taking action to address the potential health equity and human rights implications of policies in all sectors affecting health, not only the health sector.

It is proposed in this paper that a requisite characteristic needed by those working in both public health and human rights is optimism. Optimism is necessary in large part due to the abysmal situations in India as well as in the world. When addressing the challenges posed by the country and global public health and human rights crises, optimism must be joined with a critical view of the structural causes of the challenges. We must stand against inequities that exist as a result of unjust power structures.

The solution is complex but achievable with commitment, critique and dedication. Through the use of leadership skills, creativity, and optimism, coupled with an eye towards correcting unjust power structures and eliminating inequities through rights-based approaches, a clear pathway can be paved through the intersection of health and human rights in order to move further towards the realization of the right to health and other human rights envisioned by many leaders in this area.