Context and Community: Building on the Essence of Public Health in Spirituality, Health and Human Flourishing

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- What is public health?
- What has public health contributed?
- What remains?
What is Public Health?

Public health focuses on defined communities (populations) and the determinants found within that context which influence both salutogenesis and pathogenesis. Interventions are designed to directly address these determinants on a community level.

Cholera and Water Sources

John Snow (1813-1858)

19th Century British (London) Anesthesiologist and “Shoe Leather” Epidemiologist

Associated Contaminated Water with Cholera Deaths
Public Health Perspective

- State of Health (or Disease)
- Due to Interactions Between Agent (cause), Host (human), Environment (context)
- Relationships are Complex and Recursive

Another Model – Haddon Matrix

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<th>Host</th>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Spiritual?</th>
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<td>Pre-Event</td>
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<td>Post-Event</td>
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Goals of Public Health

- Characterize Health (Disease) Relationships
  - Causal Agents
  - Risk Factors
  - Outcomes (Morbidity, Mortality)
- Identify Possible Points of Intervention
  - Eliminate Agent, Strengthen the Host, Change the Environment
  - Change Risk Factors
  - Modify Outcomes
- Design and Evaluate Interventions
- Change Policy
- Improve Population Health

Contributions of Public Health

- Epidemiology
- Health Behavior Theory
- Practical Approaches to Reaching Populations at Risk (e.g., churches)
- Policy and Evaluation Opportunities (especially in the context of health disparities)
Contributions of Public Health (2)

- Community-Based Participatory Research

CBPR is a "collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBPR begins with a research topic of importance to the community, has the aim of combining knowledge with action and achieving social change to improve health outcomes and eliminate health disparities."

-- WK Kellogg Foundation Community Health Scholars Program

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CBPR

- Process involves community members as equal partners from the beginning.

- The approach uses qualitative initiatives (focus groups, targeted interviews, Photo-Voice) to inform the quantitative evaluation of interventions.

- Inherently acknowledges a need to even the playing field of intervention and research (between communities and academic institutions).

- Opens dialog for developing a greater understanding of a biopsychosocial and spiritual approach to health.

- Affords the opportunity to be community-based and context specific.
HOPE Works: An Example of CBPR Success

- Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Administered through the UNC Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- My Role --- Member of the Community Advisory Committee

HOPE Works 2004-2009

Health: obesity prevention, healthy eating, physical activity, stress management; mental health

Opportunities: education, work, economic improvement

Partnerships: community resources, community colleges, support from other women

Empowerment: to have an influence at the personal, social and community level
HOPE Works Intervention

**HOPE Circles:**
- Low income, overweight women, multi-ethnic: African American, Latina, American Indian (Coharie) and Anglo
- Circles led by trained leaders from the community
- Provide social support, information, strategies for health behavior change
- Goal-setting in health and hope domains (e.g. getting education, jobs, housing, etc)

HOPE Works

- Builds on previous 10 years of experience and community relationships
- CBPR project, active participation of CAC in all phases of planning
- Addresses high prevalence of obesity and community concern about this issue
- ...and addresses social determinants of health, including education, employment, and income
- Spirituality not explicitly included yet the HOPE Circles are inherently spiritual and faith is lived in this context. Why not acknowledge it?
NEXT STEPS

- Educate the next generation --- teach comparative beliefs and cultural context – *in schools of public health.*
- Seek out active participation of community members in designing research. Develop an understanding of context within community. Engage theologically not just as locations to access populations.
- Do qualitative work.
- Actively acknowledge the inherent value of spirituality as a component of human flourishing.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Luke 12:34
Acknowledgements

- Colleagues in the Community Advisory Committee for HOPE Works.

- Project Staff for HOPE Works.