

RESEARCH PROJECT

Project name: Critique and Global Health: An International Workshop on the Nature of Critique in Critical Global Health Studies

Description: A recent, somewhat intriguing trend in the social sciences literature on global health has been the proliferation of the terms 'critique' and 'critical'. Indeed, working under the banner of critical global health studies, a growing number of anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, historians and others have sought to bring a critical perspective to contemporary global health efforts (e.g. Pfeiffer and Nichter, 2008; Fassin, 2012; Brown, Craddock and Ingram, 2012; Biehl and Petryna, 2013; Anderson, 2015).

Not surprisingly perhaps, what these scholars understand under critique tends to differ extensively. For many, being critical is about being an activist and committed to social justice. They believe that the historical or ethnographic evidence they collect offers a critical insight into the everyday reality of healthcare in poor countries and the actual concerns of people.

This evidence, they suggest, should be used as an 'empirical lantern' (Biehl and Petryna, 2013) to challenge and correct the technocratic certainties of global health experts that sometimes hamper effective action against existing inequalities. Other scholars feel more uneasy about such an activist agenda and favour greater scientific and moral detachment.

For them, being critical is not about being a 'global apostle of health' (Fassin, 2012), but about understanding and tracing the genealogies of the intellectual assumptions, institutional forms and material infrastructures that make it possible to think and do global health today. While such an understanding might well lead to the reformulation of global health problems and practices, it is not necessarily an aim of these scholars.

This workshop is an opportunity to reflect on these recent efforts to bring a critical perspective to global health. Specifically, the workshop will bring together social and political scientists with global health and biomedical experts to explore the nature, possibility and relevance of critique in the study of global health problems and practices.

Principle investigators: David Reubi, Clare Herrick

Aims: to explore the nature, possibility and relevance of critique in the study of global health problems and practices.

Research funding: King's College Global Engagement Award (2015-2016)

Partners: Department of Anthropology, History and Social Medicine at the University of California San Francisco and the Departments of Geography

More details: <http://criticalglobalhealth.org/global-health-and-critique-an-international-workshop-on-the-nature-of-critique-in-critical-global-health-studies/>