

David M. Craig and Ivan Douglas Hicks

“Caring for Medicaid: Public Ethics as Methodology in Motion”

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Abstract

Jesus, Immanuel, came to dwell with humanity to incite change necessary to reconcile people to God. Christ’s incarnation provided more than a spectacle on Calvary. Through his life and ministry, Jesus demonstrated how humanity should live in relationship to God and with one another. The Christian’s work is not a private, isolated pursuit. The salvific act of God through Jesus is *love in motion*, the ultimate model for “Doing Ethics.”

Theories and methodologies can be independently conceived and privately developed initially, but ethical ideas must be subjected to scrutiny by diverse publics to become articulated into community-driven values and relationships for public policy change. This formative commitment has evolved as two researchers, a White university ethicist and a Black pastor/scholar activist, have engaged for seven years to discover and refine how to appreciate and co-produce transformative knowledge with community as the experts.

Practicing “Community Valued Research” by seeking and receiving direction, critique, and creativity, we and our partners have built authentic relationships and stronger community research methods as we act on these questions: How can we bolster health equity by disrupting the moral hierarchies currently legitimizing Medicaid barriers and cuts? How can we build a new public invested in health for residents of low-income communities? Through an interdisciplinary health equity study, supported by a national foundation, we challenge the presuppositions of an ideology of “aid” that imposes administrative burdens on Medicaid beneficiaries in the name of “personal responsibility.” Findings from our quantitative data team, 100 semi-structured interviews, and community health equity gatherings drive our action-oriented advocacy for policy change. We will also share innovative methodologies for engaging the community as experts with the most incisive, genuine, and usable data.