

ious interested parties. Even so, he is sanguine, seeing public health advocates as having a role to play in 'civilising' global capitalism in a similar way to how the sanitary reformers of the 1800s tempered the excesses of *laissez-faire* economics. It remains to be seen whether this is too optimistic a vision; either way, the book is a valuable contribution to the debate as well as an important historical study.

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Health in Australia. Sociological Concepts and Issues (3rd edn). Edited by Carol Grbich (Pearson, Frenchs Forest, 2004, \$62.95, ISBN 0-724-81106-0) 318 pp.

THE THIRD EDITION OF *HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA*, EDITED BY CAROL GRBICH, provides an excellent introduction to the contribution that sociology makes to a critical engagement with contemporary experiences and structures of medicine, health and illness. Engaging with crucial theoretical debates and empirical approaches, the text is divided into three main parts, and fourteen chapters in total. Part One, entitled 'Social Process: History and conceptual frameworks', provides a strong critical overview of key theoretical perspectives in sociology (Carol Grbich), sociological critiques of medicine (Kevin White), and an analysis of health technology as fundamentally social (Fran Collyer). The chapters provide students with a clear engagement with dominant models of health, medicine, illness and technology, identify limitations in those models, while introducing the contributions that sociology can make in these contested areas of knowledge.

Part Two focuses on the crucial sociological terrain of the social patterns and social experiences of health. In a period where genetic determinism and individualisation are on the rise, these chapters provide an important reminder of the urgent need for sociologists to continue to argue strongly for social explanations of health and illness. Chapters on Aboriginal health (Ian Anderson), migrant and refugee health (Roberta Julian), gender and health (Maria Zadoroznyj), ageing and health (Eileen Clark and Terence McCann), class and health (Neil Burdess), and mental health, citizenship and human rights (Mike Hazelton) all provide vital examples of the centrality of social relations to health patterns and experiences. The chapters also continue to engage with debates around the social construction of knowledge, not only critiquing biomedical models of health but also engaging reflexively with the limitations of sociological approaches.

Part Three focuses on social relationships that are intimately linked to health. It includes chapters on the health professions (Michael Wearing, Eileen Willis), the body (Erica McWilliam, Rob Irvine), and the relationship between complementary and orthodox medicine (Gary Easthope). Through these chapters, the authors reveal the ways in which power and conflict are central to the relationships that form the basis of health professions and practice.

Inevitably, as in any textbook, there are some issues that could have been covered in more detail. For example, while theoretical debates around risk and individualisation and their implications for health are discussed, they could have been developed more fully through the book. Similarly, the impact of globalisation on health structures and experiences, for example in the context of HIV/AIDS, could have been brought more centrally into the analysis. Further, while the authors provide excellent introductions to contrasting theories within sociology, the challenge for the teacher remains one of how to navigate these different approaches in collaboration with their students.

The book was originally developed to meet the needs of teaching the sociology of health and illness to undergraduate health professionals. With its integration of theory and up-to-date examples, it succeeds admirably at this level. It also works well as a text for students with a stronger grounding in sociology, as I have found in using it as a core text in an undergraduate health sociology subject. The provision of tutorial questions, further research resources, chapter summaries, and an extensive glossary also make the book user-friendly, both for students and their teachers. In an increasingly crowded field of health texts, *Health in Australia* stands out in showing the vital contributions that sociology can make to our understanding of medicine, health and illness, while also acknowledging the challenges it faces.

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A History of Medical Administration in New South Wales, 1788–1973 (2nd edn). By C. J. Cummins. (Electronically published by NSW Health, Sydney, 2003, at website address: www.health.nsw.gov.au/history; originally published by Health Commission of NSW, Sydney, 1979, ISBN 0-7240-3041-7) 224 pp.

DR CYRIL CUMMINS WAS THE LAST DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH in New South Wales, a position he held from 1959 until his unwilling retirement in 1973 when the Department of Health was replaced by