

Health, Culture and Society

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Conceptual Legacies and
Contemporary Applications

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In fond memory of the feminist scholar Deborah Lynn Steinberg, whose support, love and intelligence made this book possible.

Preface

For a number of years (2005–2011), I taught a course, ‘Health, Culture and Society’, to large groups of third-year sociology students at the University of Liverpool, England. I realised that the readings I assigned were dependent upon both sociological and anthropological perspectives. I engaged with and demonstrated a range of frames through which to interrogate health and illness. Set up that way, the distinctions between anthropologically framed questions and sociologically framed ones were placed in implicit dialogue. At that time, I thought it useful to write a book of the same title, explaining key concepts and making sense of diverse traditions of thought surrounding health and illness. This book has been a long time in the making but it has been worth it. I am happy to have recruited this group of talented co-authors as they have been a pleasure to work with.

Having said the above, I would contend that *Health, Culture and Society* is a ‘discursive’ conception explored by scholars across a variety of disciplines, particularly in medicine and the allied health professions (i.e. nursing, public health and rehabilitation sciences), anthropology, sociology, history and economics. And we hope scholars involved in these disciplines will be interested in our book. As co-authors, we trace the history of enduring concepts (i.e. meaning formative ones which have been foundational in the development of our disciplines) used in the broad area of health and look at how sociology and anthropology, through

an analysis of these enduring concepts, can be applied. As a result, we emphasise the political implications of our disciplines vis-à-vis health research. Importantly, feminist legacies are explored, while authors will interrogate the philosophical and historical roots of medical sociology and anthropology.

Helsinki, Finland

Elizabeth Ettore

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Elizabeth Ettorre

Many of the issues explored in my chapters were developed for a new upper-level undergraduate module for sociology students, at the University of York, *The Global Transformation of Health*. I am grateful to the students who have taken the module over the last three years for their insights. Their debate of the topics has informed my writing.

Ellen Annandale

I am grateful to Renee Sentilles and Robert Walters, fellow members of *The Writing House*, who asked insightful questions about ethnographic research, midwifery and theories about gift giving. I thank Lee Hoffer for engaging in many thought-provoking discussions on the nature of reciprocity and gift exchange. I am grateful to Elizabeth Ettore for her great generosity, leadership and continual support through the writing process. As always, I am thankful to the people of Sungai who have long hosted me with grace and patience while I asked what surely felt like endless questions.

Vanessa M. Hildebrand

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Ana Porroche-Escudero

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