

# BOOK REVIEWS

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## Newly published books

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**AIDS in the Modern World**, I. Edward Alcamo, *Blackwell Science, Oxford, 2001*, ISBN 0-632044748 (pb). *Aids in the Modern World* focuses on the biological basis of AIDS and HIV. The book has a simple approach to the topic and enables students to focus on the main points of HIV disease and its impact on society. The text is in an easy to read, well-organized format, yet provides detailed information. It is an appropriate text for undergraduate non-science and allied health students. Complementing any standard textbook in courses focusing on health, human disease or in any course where the instructor wants to address both the biological and social aspects of HIV/AIDS.

It is written by one of the most distinguished authors in the field of microbiology and AIDS research.

- Designed to supplement any core text in the teaching of AIDS.
- Contains detailed medical facts and medical content, which is explained in a simplified manner.
- Includes a full chapter on AIDS and society.
- Ethical issues are integrated throughout, e.g. are needle exchange programs a good idea?

**The Merseyside Guidelines for Health Impact Assessment, 2nd edn**, A. Scott-Samuel, M. Birley, K. Arden and the International Health Impact Assessment Consortium, *IMPACT-Department of Public Health, University of Liverpool, UK, 2001*, 22 pp, ISBN 1-874038-56-2. Available online as a PDF file at: <http://www.ihia.org.uk/document/merseyguide3.pdf>

**Rationing: Constructed Realities and Professional Practices**, David Hughes and Donald Light (eds), *Blackwell, Oxford, 2002*, 199 pp, ISBN 0-631-22857-9-8 (pb). Under the Sociology of Health and Illness Monograph series, this volume examines health care rationing in action using recent case studies from the UK, Europe and North America. Drawing on data from a variety of hospitals and community settings, the contributors demonstrate how prioritization and access to care

depend on organizational arrangements and professional practices, which are invisible to the service user.

**Communication and Health in a Multi-Ethnic Society**, Mark Robinson, *Policy Press, Bristol 2002*, 206 pp, ISBN 1-86134-341-8. Communication and cultural diversity have become key focus areas as health services engage with health improvement and equity goals. This book, by a Research Fellow at the School of Healthcare Studies at the University of Leeds in the UK, focuses on health communication interventions concerning health service users who may lack fluency in English. It highlights that meeting the needs of all service users, including disadvantaged groups, depends on both structures and processes of communication. The following areas are covered:

- Issues surrounding ethnic and cultural diversity, racism and communication.
- Barriers to effective communication.
- Interventions aimed at enhancing health care communication.
- Priorities for service development, practice and research by focusing on evidence.

**A Healthy Judgement? Health and Health Care in the Netherlands in International Perspective**, P. W. Achterberg, P. G. N. Kramers and E. A. Van der Wilk, *National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), Bilthoven, The Netherlands, 2002*, 35 pp, RIVM report 271558 005. This short publication, produced by three members of the Department for Public Health Forecasting of RIVM, analyses international comparative reports on Dutch health and health care, trends in Dutch life expectancy in a European context, and trends and causes of mortality around birth in the Netherlands. Their analyses demonstrate:

- Reasons for the stagnating decline in perinatal mortality in the Netherlands.
- The need for deeper conceptual approaches to link health to its determinants and policy implications.
- The need for good comparable data on health determinants and health care.

- The importance of lifestyles and of prevention to improve health status in the EU.
- The report concludes with recommendations for Dutch policy makers.

**Drug Misuse and Motherhood**, Hilary Klee, Marcia Jackson and Suzan Lewis, *Routledge, London, 2002*, 305 pp, ISBN 0-415-27194-0 (hb), ISBN-0-415-27195-9 (pb). Professionals in health and social services agencies have become concerned about the growing use of illicit drugs among women and, particularly, the reluctance of such women to seek help from them. It is officially recognized that drug-using women do not disclose their usage to midwifery and antenatal services.

This book gives drug-using mothers a voice, and by means of longitudinal research and in-depth interviews provides an insight into their views on family life, pregnancy, motherhood, service delivery and development. It also balances this with the viewpoints of professionals. From their analysis they discuss appropriate policy implications.

**Drugs in Focus**, *European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), Lisbon*. EMCDDA have recently launched a new series of bimonthly policy briefings—*Drugs in Focus*. These 4-page briefings are aimed at policy makers to inform the policy-making process in the drugs area. Each edition includes a brief introduction to the theme, key policy issues, graphs/tables, policy considerations, web information and further reading. The first two editions focus on ‘Key Role of Substitution in Drug Treatment’ and ‘Drug Users and the Law in the EU’. Other topics in 2002 include injecting drug use and risk behavior and recreational drug use. Copies can be downloaded in the 12 languages (all official EU languages and Norwegian) from the EMCDDA website: <http://www.emcdda.org/infopoint/publications/focus.shtml>. If any readers wish to formally review any of the above publications, please contact the Book Reviews Editor (contact details at the end of this section).

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## Books reviews

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### **Handbook of Rural Health**

Sana Loue and Beth E. Quill (eds)  
*Kluwer/Plenum, New York, 2001*  
370 pp, ISBN 0-306-46479-9, \$90

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The strength of an edited volume always hinges on the quality of the individual chapters, the format and content, and the relevance of the work to those of us working in the targeted field of inquiry. I shall comment on each of these dimensions in turn.

Loue and Quill have assembled chapter authors who have made substantive contributions to their respective fields. Any text that begins with a chapter on rural health policy by Keith Mueller is starting off on the right foot. Mueller raises the issue of the overarching battle to either bring resources to the people or bring people to the resources. Although the two approaches conflict, he notes the historical give-and-take between the two perspectives and sets the table for the policy advocacy efforts that lie in front of us. Although Mueller would argue that rural health advocates have made some progress in the past decade, he would also summarize the current state of rural health systems as inadequate at best. Most important, he argues that we must depart from our traditional ways of thinking about the barriers to improved rural health and identify the unique issues in rural health that should be considered in an overall national health policy. This requires thinking creatively about building rural health policy from a grass roots perspective, focusing directly on the needs of rural Americans, and considering their needs as frequently similar, although differing in magnitude, from the rest of the country.

One criticism of the text, as with many collected works, is the extreme heterogeneity in the scope of the various chapters. Some provide an in-depth theoretical or analytical presentation of a topic. For example, the Aday *et al.* chapter provides a strong theoretical presentation of some of the very

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critical equity issues with which we all struggle on a regular basis. Others provide much shorter, often cursory discussions of a topic. Certainly there are intentional differences between some of the early chapters that set the stage for the text and the shorter, substantively focused chapters that follow. Nevertheless, some chapters provide sound material upon which we might stimulate graduate instructional dialogue, while others appear much more sophomoric and would be more suitable for undergraduate settings. A single text cannot be all things to all people.

A second issue with the text is as much humorous as a source of true criticism. The second chapter identifies methodological concerns with the study of rural health issues. A fundamental methodological issue identified is the lack of a universally accepted definition of rural—a flaw in the field that leads to different numerators and denominators on a regular basis. This is evidenced by the fact that almost every chapter begins with a reference to the number of rural Americans or the proportion of the US population that is rural. Yet, these figures vary considerably from chapter to chapter.

The format of the book is logical and facilitates the introduction of key rural health issues and content. The first five chapters of the book construct a foundation for the detail that follows by providing an overview of the history of rural health policy, research methods, and critical public health and ethical issues facing rural America today. An underlying assumption is that the reader has some understanding of what public health is all about. The early chapters provide some very useful contextual information. The text then provides chapter-level detail about 11 critical rural health issues currently receiving attention. This logical approach follows the *Public Health 2010* goals by touching on critical topical areas. The text then closes with three chapters that discuss general approaches, including a chapter by Robinson and Guidry that touches on some key workforce issues. This is a nice way to wrap up the textbook by addressing another critical issue facing the public health movement in this country, particularly in rural America.

Of course, the most critical issue with a textbook is its relevance to those who regularly use textbooks—in this case, the faculty and students interested in rural public health issues. Loue and Quill have provided the field with a text that first provides a generic foundation from which we can examine critical issues in rural health systems, then quickly covers many of the key substantive areas. As a faculty member at a school of rural public health, I have been seeking textbooks that target this topic for a few years. Several options exist, depending upon whether the emphasis is on the exposure to general public health information [e.g. (Lee and Estes, 2001; Turnock, 2001)], a topical presentation of substantive issues with a good grounding in public health practice [e.g. (Skutchfield and Keck, 1997)] or a more data-based presentation of the health problems facing rural America [e.g. (Ricketts, 1999)].

Certainly the Loue and Quill text provides a much more direct and traditional approach to targeting rural public health issues than the Ricketts volume. The usefulness of this text likely hinges on the setting in which a course in rural health is delivered. If the targeted students are already exposed to a strong foundation in public health principals, this text provides exposure to some of the pressing issues of rural health. But it does not provide great depth on most topics. Further, if the students are not already well grounded in public health concepts, they may miss some of the important issues. Although it does not provide sufficient grounding in general public health constructs for the introductory graduate level course, it does provide some chapters that are very useful in public health courses focused on rural health.

Craig H. Blakely  
Department of Health Policy and Management  
School of Rural Public Health  
Texas A & M University System Health Science  
Center  
Bryan, TX 77802  
USA

## References

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- Lee, P. R. and Estes, C. L. (eds) (2001) *The Nation's Health*, 6th edn. Jones & Bartlett, Ontario.
- Ricketts, T. C. (ed.) (1999) *Rural Health in the United States*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Scutcheon, F. D. and Keck, C. W. (1997) *Principles of Public Health Practice*. Delmar, New York.
- Turnock, B. J. (2001) *Public Health: What It Is and How It Works*. Aspen, Gaithersburg, MD.
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### **Health Promotion: Effectiveness, Efficiency and Equity, 3rd edn**

Keith Tones and Sylvia Tilford  
*Nelson Thornes, Cheltenham, 2001*  
524 pp, ISBN 0-7487-4527-0 (pb)

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My starting point for this book review was to rummage my bookshelves for good old, tried and true *Health Education: Effectiveness and Efficiency*, by Tones, Tilford and Robinson (1990).

Right off, the physical contrast of the First and Third Editions is notable with regard to the thickness, width, length and density (the Third Edition has over 700 words on its densest pages!).

The result is a Third Edition that is easily twice as long as the First Edition and harder to read than the First Edition—harder not because the difficulty level has been raised, but simply because tired old eyes have difficulty jumping to the correct lines in the tightly packed columns of the book. I don't know the first thing about the economics of book publishing, but I suggest nevertheless that the Fourth Edition be considered as a two volume work, with *much* more white space on the pages.

But that is enough complaining about packaging—what about substance?

The basic structure and flow of the Third Edition is similar to the First Edition, and that is indeed positive (I cannot compare the Third and Second Editions, as my copy of the Second has disappeared from my bookshelves). Both books begin with Introductions, of course, but the one provided in the Third Edition is particularly well worth reading. It sets the tone for the book, and the tone is...exclamatory! Tones and Tilford feel quite

obviously a degree of passion for their points of view, they let the passion through and it is infective. There are many exclamation marks in my copy of the book, those of the authors and mine in the margins. I really do like this 'personality' of the book very much.

With this book the authors' continue their previous emphasis on the need for effective and ever more efficient interventions, built on sound theoretical frameworks. These themes are taken seriously, and issues of effectiveness, efficiency and the central role of theory are taken up repeatedly throughout the book. There is also some emphasis on equity, but this theme does not receive near the degree of emphasis that effectiveness and efficiency do. The inclusion of 'equity' in the book's subtitle raised this reviewer's hopes for a deeper treatment of the subject than is provided. There are a few other disappointments and these are reported below, but only after a happy report about the book's significant strengths.

Prime among these is that a great deal of the book is devoted to providing examples of solid health promotion intervention in a variety of settings and defining the conditions necessary to success. In my view, this book stands out from all other 'competitors' with regard to the depth and soundness of analysis that is provided. This is not merely a compendium of health promotion exemplars, but an analysis of the conditions that are essential to the development and delivery of quality health promotion programmes. The authors expect the reader to *work*—the level of complexity is high and this is not a once-over-lightly-with-a-highlighter book!

Another significant strength is Chapter 1, worth the price of the book all by itself. All the key concepts that are needed to follow the rest of the book are presented with the depth and critical analysis that characterize the whole work. The heart of the chapter, and of the book, is an empowerment model of health promotion, in which education and policy are inputs that provide the individual and environmental conditions necessary to health. Despite some changes in terminology, the empowerment model is almost identical to the

health promotion model around which the First Edition was organized. That there are almost no changes in the model 15 years after it was first proposed does not indicate laziness or lack of development on the part of the authors. It reflects, rather, the solidness of the original and simple idea—that health promotion is distinguishable from other approaches to managing health by its emphasis on the synergism of health education and healthy public policy.

No single book can serve all the needs of its readers and it is not fair to be too critical because of what a book does not contain. However, this reviewer cannot help but regret a hole in the work, a hole that perhaps only another book can fill.

Tones and Tilford define a most simple, and thereby elegant, anatomy for health promotion: it is the product of health education and healthy public policy. There is not, however, equal attention to these two elements in the book nor, perhaps, is it reasonable to expect there to be. The foundation for the book is health education, not healthy public policy.

The result is that a number of critical questions about effectiveness and efficiency in health promotion are not taken up at all. How can health education practice and research influence policy-making processes? What are the rational and irrational aspects of those processes, and when and how does ‘evidence’ make a difference? What are the most effective lobbying, advocacy and mediation strategies in policy influencing exercises? What are the most effective ways for NGOs to influence policy? What roles do think tanks play in the development of policy and how can health promotion learn from what they do well? How do the World Bank and the IMF influence health policy, and how can the health promotion community influence the World Bank and the IMF? What are the answers to parallel questions at the national, regional and local levels?

As this reviewer works in an interdisciplinary research center with policy analysts from the political and social sciences, he is aware of (though not familiar with) a quite large literature on these and similar questions, the answers to which are

critical if the theoretical synergy of health education and healthy public policy is to be better realized. There is no question but that Tones and Tilford have more than a passing acquaintanceship with these matters, as demonstrated by a few well-written pages early in the book and scattered throughout it. Perhaps the answer *is* a two volume Fourth Edition, providing the space needed to expand on the second term in the health promotion equation—effectiveness and efficiency in creating and maintaining healthier public policy.

However, that is another book; what can be said in summary about this book? Simply that it is a very good, advanced text on health promotion. It calls for the creation of healthy public policy, but does not dwell on how this may be achieved. It calls for effective and efficient interventions in a wide range of settings, and is brilliant in showing how this may be achieved.

*Professor Maurice Mittelmark  
Research Centre for Health Promotion  
University of Bergen  
Norway*

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### **Methods of Family Research**

Theodore Greenstein  
*Sage, London, 2001*  
186 pp, ISBN 0-761919481 (pb)

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There are many good books currently available on research methods. An increasing number are said to be written with specific reference to individual professions: Titles such as ‘Research Methods in Nursing Practice’ or ‘Research Methods for Podiatrists’ abound. This reviewer’s advice to undergraduate students is generally to look at a range of them, but not to feel obliged to buy the one that claims to be specifically for their own discipline. Most research skills are common to all professions and areas of study; the only real difference between most of such books lies in the examples that are used to illustrate the principles described and the quality of the writing employed. Such considerations are far more important than whether the title implies exclusivity to one’s own

occupational group. Before deciding to buy a research methods textbook, students should find one that they find clearly written and (relatively) easy to read.

Theodore Greenstein's *Methods of Family Research* is such a book. It is a beautifully written, articulate and straightforward introduction to research methods in the social sciences, and has a potential application far beyond that implied by its title. Greenstein makes the important distinction between writing a book explaining how to conduct research (as many, if not most, research methods textbooks set out to do) with writing a book, which enables the reader to understand and utilize research.

As such, this volume is aimed at the absolute newcomer to research methods. The first chapter deals with the questions of what social research actually is and how it can be useful. While there are examples given from the perspective of the sociology of family life, they illustrate principles in such a way that the reader can easily apply them to his/her own field. The second chapter covers some of the basics of framing research questions: variables, causality and developing hypotheses. This chapter, as with all the chapters in the book, has a set of study questions at the end to help consolidate the student's understanding.

The third and fourth chapters deal with two of the most fundamental skills needed in order to understand research: critical analysis and the use of electronic resources. Chapter 3 is a step-by-step guide to reading a research paper and developing the ability to tell the good from the indifferent. Chapter 4 provides a much-needed novice's guide to using the World Wide Web, newsgroups and electronic journals. The advantages and disadvantages of the Internet as a resource in social research are considered usefully at the end of this chapter. Chapters 5–7 consider the usual topics covered by many research methods textbooks. Levels of measurement, reliability and validity are explained clearly and concisely in Chapter 5, while the essentials of survey methods are covered in Chapter 6. Again, there is little different in these chapters than in a host of books with similar titles,

but few manage to explain these subjects as clearly and simply as Greenstein achieves here.

Chapter 7 deals, somewhat briefly given the focus of the book, with qualitative methods. This brevity is a little surprising and perhaps the only disappointing aspect of the work. The use of qualitative techniques has become far more popular with workers in the health and social care fields in the last few decades, and has more recently made significant inroads into predominantly quantitatively based areas of medical research. While this chapter introduces some important issues in qualitative research, its coverage is rather superficial and the whole chapter seems something of an afterthought. A good qualitative methods textbook would be necessary as a companion to this book for most undergraduate students in the healthcare professions or for students undertaking courses in health promotion or the social sciences.

Chapter 8 returns to quantitative methods and focuses on sampling considerations. Consistent with most of the book, this chapter works on the basis of helping the reader to appreciate other people's research, rather than to carry out their own. For example, a section titled 'How large does the sample need to be?' touches briefly on the relationship of sample size to sampling error, but does not consider statistical techniques of establishing sample sizes. This is probably adequate for the casual reader, but some students may find themselves reaching for other texts to supplement their knowledge in this area. By contrast, Chapter 9 is likely to be very valuable to undergraduates who are considering employing existing scales in their own dissertation projects. The chapter deals with the use of existing scales, indices and similar instruments in social research. Consideration is given to where to find a range of scales, issues of permission, copyright and determining consistency. There is also helpful advice concerning strategies for dealing with missing data, which final year students may find of considerable assistance.

Chapter 10 introduces some basic statistical concepts such as measures of central tendency and distribution before moving on to a discussion of a

few chosen statistical tests. While not a substitute for a dedicated statistics textbook, this chapter serves as a clear introduction to some basic concepts in statistical analysis for the newcomer. Principles are illustrated using examples from Greenstein's own field, but again they work well and readers should find it relatively easy to make the shift to their own discipline. It is only in Chapters 11 and 12 that this book addresses itself to issues specifically concerned with family studies, but even here there are useful generalizations about the nature of research, the use of public-access records and employing existing datasets. The final chapter focuses on ethical and political issues in family research, again generalizable to many related fields.

This book, as its title suggests, is an ideal resource for students in social work and related fields. However, it will be equally useful to students in nursing, midwifery, physiotherapy and podiatry. It is also an excellent 'consumer's guide' to research in the health and social sciences. Given

the burgeoning mass of research findings presented by television, radio and the press, this is likely to be a wide audience indeed. The book may also provide useful ideas for those charged with teaching research methods to health and social care students. For all of these groups, this book is recommended highly.

*Dr Kevin Lucas  
Senior Lecturer in Psychology Applied  
to Healthcare  
University of Brighton  
UK*

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