

BOOK REVIEW

The Medicalisation of Everyday Life: A Critical Perspective

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This book provides a critical overview of the current state of the medicalised lives we lead today with specific focus on the medicalisation of mental health. Sitting within a sociological perspective, the authors of the book are honest in their intentions from the outset in wanting to push boundaries, scrutinise the status quo and provoke debate within this space to create an alternate discourse to the mainstream.

Throughout the first three chapters, the authors introduce us to the key themes of the book, namely medicalisation, mental illness and mental distress. They propose medicalisation resulting from the western-centric biomedical paradigm aims to universally assimilate all of us in a one-size-fits-all approach and suffocate diversity. These chapters consider how the reality of the powerful and evolving *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)* has become a mainstream tool for the privileged and questions the legitimacy of psychiatry and the diagnoses bestowed on individuals. The intentions and conduct of big pharma and biotechnology companies are also examined as well as the power of the media in formulating the beliefs of the community.

Throughout the book, the authors give a comprehensive historical account of each theme and they also dedicate time to the gendered experiences of the topics – reflecting the critical lens they are applying. They reinforce the power imbalances and control that sit firmly with the “experts,” being medical professionals, pharmaceutical companies and lobbyists driving their individual agendas.

After setting the scene, the authors go on to critically evaluate the specific topics of depression (Chapter 4), anxiety (Chapter 5), post-traumatic stress disorder (Chapter 6) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Chapter 7) to reflect a landscape of diagnosis which is expanding throughout the western world. They highlight the inconsistencies that pervade the *DSM* and uncover the historical assumptions, biases and myths concerning mental health up to

the present day. The authors argue that mental health diagnoses appear to diminish the complexities of what it is to be human. This again being the underscoring of the biomedical paradigm which attempts to categorise, classify or compartmentalise our emotions, personality traits and behaviours without consideration for intersectionality, environmental, social and cultural factors.

Chapter 8 specifically confronts the power of the pharmaceutical industry and unethical practices undertaken to pursue their neoliberal agenda through the use of ghost writing and clinical trials. The authors explicitly report on the alarming deception and manipulation of research and evidence by pharmaceutical companies and the academics on their payroll. The authors acutely ask: *Is it evidence-based medicine or marketing-based medicine?*

Chapter 9 considers the application and impact of the western biomedical model for mental health across the globe. They describe the tension that has arisen as a result of cross-cultural non-transferability and lack of consideration for local and cultural multiplicity. They suggest an approach to global mental health that is more inclusive, participatory and responsive to local sociocultural perspectives and realities (p.136). Chapter 10 discusses the impact of technology on the medicalisation of everyday life and the likelihood of growth in this domain with apps and smart devices that track mental and physical wellbeing.

Throughout the book, the biopsychosocial model is discussed as an alternate approach to the biomedical as equal consideration is paid to psychological and social impacts on a person's experience of illness and well-being. Coupled with talking therapies, public health policy and health promotion, the authors suggest an emerging global alternative.

Upon analysis, for the novice reader, the academic language within the book may intimidate and lead to disengagement. Subsequently, the reach of the book may be limited to a particular cohort and exclude a subset of the general community who would benefit from contemplating and critically reflecting how the themes impact on their own lives. For clinicians, practice examples to illustrate the alternative positionality presented would have been an added bonus to this already exceptional, thought-provoking read.

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