Medical Sociology and Technology: Critical Engagements

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Abstract

In this selective review of the literature on medical sociology's engagement with technology, we outline the concurrent developments of the American Sociological Association section on medicine and advances in medical treatment. We then describe theoretical and epistemological issues with scholars' treatment of technology in medicine. Using symbolic interactionist concepts, as well as work from the interdisciplinary field of science and technology studies, we review and synthesize critical connections in and across sociology's intellectual relationship with medical technology. Next, we discuss key findings in these literatures, noting a shift from a focus on the effects of technology on practice to a reconfiguration of human bodies. We also look toward the future, focusing on connections between technoscientific identities and embodied health movements. Finally, we call for greater engagement by medical sociologists in studying medical technology and the process of policy-making—two areas central to debates in health economics and public policy.

Keywords

medical practice, bodies, epistemology, feminist science and technology studies, symbolic interactionism, biopolitics, embodied health movements

The Medical Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association was founded in 1959, at the turn of a decade that had witnessed tremendous advances in medical technology. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation was innovated, and the first pacemaker was developed. Penicillin was chemically synthesized in the 1940s, ushering in an era of mass production of antibiotics. Salk fashioned a polio vaccine in 1952, and by 1955 it was being distributed to American schoolchildren (Oshinsky 2005). The first kidney transplants were performed, and dialysis was innovated to treat kidney failure. Heart transplants followed. Scientists researched the birth control pill in a shifting context of sexual politics, successfully but under ethically dubious conditions (Briggs 2002). The price of hospital care doubled in the 1950s, and national health expenditures grew to 4.5 percent of the gross national product (GNP) (Starr 1982). Health insurance companies began to spread across the United States, inaugurating employer-based benefits, and limited private coverage for people who could afford it (Murray 2007; Quadagno 2006).

In 2009, 50 years later, health care accounted for 16 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), the highest ratio among industrialized nations (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 2009). And according to the American Public Health Association, approximately 47 million Americans (many employed at least part-time) were uninsured. The new millennium brought expanded use of genetic

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technologies, growth in nanotechnology, diffusion of knowledge produced by the Human Genome Project (HGP), a booming transnational pharmaceutical industry, new reproductive technologies, standardization of care, and escalating visualization and digitalization of medicine. The twenty-first century ushered in biomedicalization across sectors (Clarke et al. 2003, 2010), new health movements (e.g., Brown et al. 2004; Brown 2007; Epstein 1996, 2008; Klawiter 2004, 2008), and translational research (the practical application of scientific research) (Wainwright et al. 2006)—alongside ongoing contention about U.S. health care. The 2008 election of President Obama, whose campaign platform emphasized health reform, deepened public debates.

Across the half-century lifespan of the Medical Sociology Section, during which sweeping changes have impacted American society as a whole, technologies have changed dramatically, too, from large "machines at the bedside" to tiny pills and devices that enter into and transform human bodies, and information technologies that have altered if not restructured health care provision. These have been central to health care practices and financing (or lack thereof), politics of reform, health outcomes, and scholarship. Medical sociologists have investigated both the category of technology writ large and specific drugs, devices, digital innovations, and technical practices such as neonatal intensive care (e.g., Anspach 1993; Zetka 2003). Many scholars explore the essential "nature" of technology; contestation surrounds the term and its application to specific devices, techniques, and practices (Nye 2006).

The substantive and theoretical questions medical sociologists have pursued are as complex and capacious as the shifting technological landscape itself —far too extensive to fully document here. In offering a half-century "snapshot" of research on biomedical technology, we briefly profile three major foci: how technologies have reshaped medical practices; how technologies have reconfigured human bodies and our conceptions of them; and how technologies have been crucial to the emergence of new health social movements. While there has been major work on medical technologies, until the turn of this century sociologists did not attend thoroughly to technical aspects of medical practice. Only within a theoretical paradigm in which technology was considered peripheral could we get an account of the social transformation of American medicine that little discusses the role of key technologies (much less science) in professionalization (Starr 1982).

THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Part of our charge for this issue of JHSB, and the ASA session from which it originated in 2009, was to articulate our key findings about technology. Yet what we know is inextricably bound up with how we know. Technologies have varied across 50 years; so, too, have theories, concepts, and methods for understanding them. Thus, we cannot discuss shifts in our knowledge about technologies without chronicling the myriad ways in which scholars have approached the topic. These epistemological developments have contributed to our collective knowledge about technology, advancing medical sociology while also broadening its connections to other scholarly areas. Concepts such as medicalization and biomedicalization and a range of perspectives (e.g., symbolic interactionist, feminist, constructionist, and social movement approaches) have significantly reconfigured what "technology" means, under what conditions, and for whom,

In the mid-twentieth century and beyond, nascent sociologists of health and medicine were interested in the impact of particular technologies, as medical professionals used them "at the bedside" (Reiser and Anbar 1984). These technologies, often framed as external to meatier intellectual topics, were studied to understand the social order of medical work and the people who engaged in it as practitioners and patients. The focus was not on technology per se, but rather on the practices altered by introduction of new devices. Theoretically, the goal was to elucidate the contours of biomedicine itself, and not necessarily the tools of the trade or their unique, varied technical histories (e.g., Strauss et al. 1985).

Medical technologies have long been criticized as one form of medicalization (Zola 1972), a potentially dehumanizing process that restricts the autonomy of both experts and nonexperts as they confront pain, suffering, and death. Illich (1975) claimed that interventions intended to make sick people well in fact made sick people sicker, turning progress into pathogenesis. Technologies designed to alleviate symptoms of disease, according to this view, prolong suffering needlessly, and at exorbitant cost. Illich's concern with iatrogenic diseases, medicalization, and the high costs and profits of pharmaceuticals and medical devices remain with us, and they constitute a subtext of contemporary debates about health care. Other scholars of the political economy of health care extended these debates (McKinlay 1984; Navarro 1986). Medical machinery now monitors fetuses

during delivery, while magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) maps our brains—each technology one step in the process of defining (or divining) the normal and the pathological (Canguilhem 1991; Foucault 1994, 2008).

Further developments, such as more complicated understandings of medicalization and stratification, were spurred by women's health movements of the 1970s (Lorber and Moore 2002). Feminist scholarship has both celebrated and critiqued the medical profession and its practices and technologies (Clarke and Olesen 1999; Ruzek. Olesen, and Clarke 1997). These studies underscored power relations embedded in medical technologies, and their differential impact on women relative to men. Indeed, research on women's health has long emphasized that health care is stratified (Ginsburg and Rapp 1995), as are medicalization experiences (Bell 1995, 2009; Riessman 1983). Some women (usually white, middle-class women) receive too much care and unnecessary interventions while many other women (especially poor women and women of color) receive too little. This chronic tension has provided diverse perspectives on, and varying levels of appreciation for, women's health care.

Symbolic interactionists, rooted in pragmatism and the Chicago School, created an early and vital home within the sociology of medicine. These contributions have focused, in part, on social interactions within medicine (e.g., hospitals, clinics, nursing homes) as forms of work (Strauss et al. 1985). This approach led to surprising findings about ways in which doctors, nurses, and other health professionals make the work of others easier, for example smoothing out ruffled emotions or preparing families for bad news (Star and Strauss 1999; Strauss 1988). Symbolic interactionists also analyzed medical practices in terms that highlight processes instead of outcomes. From Glaser and Strauss's (1965) early work on dying, to Charmaz's (1991) portrait of chronic illness, to Timmermans's (1999) study of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), symbolic interactionists have documented and theorized medical work, technologies, and care, refreshing such stalwart sociological concepts as trajectory.

Strauss and colleagues analyzed uses of machines for diagnosis and treatment, including laboratory tests, mobile x-ray machines, and heart rate monitors, as well as the growing army of technicians who do the "articulation work" between human patients and medical technologies (Strauss et al. 1985; Wiener et al. 1997). Chronic illness,

they found, led to a growing reliance on medical technologies for monitoring and maintaining health. The major thrust of this research investigated the role of technology in changing practices. How, for example, did doctors, nurses, and patients respond to new technologies? How did technologies affect patients' illness experiences? What was the relationship between technologies and new systems of professional knowledge? How did technology impact conceptions of the patient and his or her illness? These questions continue to drive sociological research on health care technologies (Conrad and Gabe 1999; Franklin 2007).

Working at the intersection of medical sociology and science and technology studies, scholars developed other concepts (Clarke and Star 2007). For example, Star and Griesemer (1989) theorized boundary objects, or those objects (such as fetuses, genes, and brains) whose meanings are common and flexible enough to be intelligible across social arenas, but distinct and obdurate enough to carry specific localized meanings. Cultural and material characteristics of these objects, both within and across social arenas, make shared understandings, collaboration, and work itself possible. For example, Williams et al. (2008) show how human embryos as boundary objects link the biomedical worlds of embryonic stem cells and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis. Similarly, Fujimura's (1988, 1996) notion of "bandwagons" in clinical research made possible new understandings of the theory and method packages that clinicians and scientists use in advancing their work. And Clarke and Fujimura's (1992) theoretical elaboration of "the right tools for the job" offered new material, symbolic, and institutional parameters for locating technologies in practice. This body of work allowed scholars to see how previously invisible technologies work in the practical accomplishment of science.

Scholars have also generated new ideas about classification as an organizing concept for scientific and biomedical practice, and they also have shown how classification systems are themselves technologies. By unpacking the processes by which classification systems are created and sustained, Bowker and Star (2000) demonstrate the social and political impulses that animate these. Their work also illustrates the ways in which messy, complex practices are conceptually narrowed in order to "fit" within existing knowledge systems. These classification systems as technologies are crucial for organizing knowledge and practice. For example, proposed revisions to the

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) would remove Asperger's Syndrome, placing it under the more general "autism spectrum disorders" (ASD). Such changes have real consequences for patients, who often define themselves as distinct from people with autism (Grinker 2010; Tanner 2010).

Timmermans and Berg (2003) critique evidencebased medicine as a type of technology that provides (or claims to provide) "gold standard" care. Similar classification practices occur for large-scale projects, such as the "International Classification of Diseases," "Nursing Interventions Classification" (Bowker and Star 2000), and the DSM (Horwitz 2002). Clarke and Casper (1996; see also Casper and Clarke 1998) focus on practices of reading and classifying pap smears. Simple diagnostic practices allow many tests to be analyzed per day, while at the same time rendering classification more difficult for lab technicians who meticulously examine specimens and slides. Classification schemes thus attempt to make sense of nebulous biological material (Keating and Cambrosio 2002, 2003).

Clarke and colleagues (2003, 2010) reformulated a central concept in medical sociologymedicalization—that was not routinely associated with technology, turning our attention toward contemporary, cutting-edge forms of "biomedicalization." This term encompasses both old and new practices, such as genome-wide association studies, nanoscale medicine that upends common sense distinctions between organic and inorganic matter. and devices made to alter electrical signals within the brain. To some degree, biomedicalization brings us full-circle to earlier notions of medicalization (Zola 1972; Conrad 2005, 2007), but the concept is updated and expanded theoretically for the twenty-first century. Biomedicalization is inflected with characteristic symbolic interactionist and science and technology studies attention to (1) processes and knowledge, (2) an interweaving of medicine with science, (3) recognition of vertical and horizontal integration of health care markets and biocapital, (4) introduction of nascent technologies and reinventions of the old, and (5) new organotechnical configurations of human bodies (Cooper 2008).

Finally, medical sociologists have taken up Foucauldian concepts, including biopolitics, to theorize individual health in relation to governmentality and governance (Armstrong 1995; Cooper 2008; Waldby 1996, 2000). Others have utilized Foucault's notion of biopower to underscore the productive capacities of human bodies

(Hatch 2009; Waldby and Mitchell 2006). While Foucault's work has been highly influential, he did not address the specific role of technologies (e.g., tests, prosthetics, drugs) in and on biopolitical processes. Rather, he focused on knowledge as a kind of social apparatus or technology that shaped systems of governance and attempted control over life. He described other social technologies, such as the panopticon, a prison system designed such that one guard could survey all prisoners without himself being seen (Foucault 1995). This form of governance, with its imagined (or real) surveillance, ultimately affected notions of human health and well-being. More recent Foucauldian work considers twenty-first century technologies in relation to new discursive and institutional formations, and the consequences of these for human bodies and lives (Casper and Moore 2009; Lakoff 2005; Talley 2008).

In sum, in mid-twentieth century theoretical paradigms, technologies were often black-boxed. That is, the object of analysis was not technology per se, but rather practices surrounding the technology and people who both used it and on whom it was used. Political, economic, and early feminist perspectives recognized the intensely political valence of technologies, yet these perspectives saw technology as fairly static. Technologies were conceptualized as inert, ahistorical objects, uninteresting in and of themselves but with a dynamic capacity to reshape social practices and reorganize human bodies. Symbolic interactionist, feminist, and science and technology studies approaches, while highlighting practices, began to focus on technologies themselves. Previously black-boxed medical technologies were dissected and their historical, cultural, and political innards examined. In newer approaches, there is vivid and sustained recognition that technologies, health care practices, bodies, and identities are continually and mutually shaped, with innumerable consequences for human lives.

KEY FINDINGS

Impact of Technologies in and on Practice

Over the past 20 years, a major shift has occurred in the organization and goals of medicine, in which technical innovations have reshaped the contours of practice (Clarke et al. 2003, 2010). Medical sociologists have engaged with technology, using a "technology in practice" perspective, akin to the "science in practice" perspectives utilized by science and technology scholars (Pickering 1992). They have shown how professionals, patients, and others interact with and through medical technologies (and with each other via technologies) while also showing how new and old technologies influence health care practices and other aspects of social life. Through these interactions, new meanings and categories—of patienthood, humanity, disease, risk, and health—are forged. These shifts mark a move from enhanced control over external nature to the harnessing and transformation of internal nature, often rebuilding life itself (Franklin 2000; Rose 2007), along with its fundamental properties.

Thompson (2005), for example, shows how women undergoing in vitro fertilization mobilize different forms of argument, reflection, and dialogue to account for success or failure. Instead of lacking agency, we see agency made operative through objectification. This "ontological choreography," as Thompson (2005) termed it, describes the development of actions and ideas that link persons with (and through) reproductive technologies in domains of practice. Dumit (2003), by contrast, shows how positron emission tomography (PET) brain imaging technologies are used to bolster professional accounts of "knowing" human types or persons, tracking the technology from development to implementation to cultural impact. These studies are exemplary in their descriptions and analyses of people and medical technologies interacting.

The history of ultrasound is also revealing. Ultrasound was developed for detecting icebergs after the sinking of the Titanic, expanded into naval warfare during World War I, and later used in manufacturing of metals (Yoxen 1987). Early twentieth century practitioners believed ultrasound could destroy tumors, and subsequent use grew exponentially between the 1930s and 1950s. Visual mapping of the body was infinitely more appealing as the hazards of x-rays became known (Caufield 1989). In the 1970s, ultrasound was central to the emerging field of fetal medicine as clinicians attempted to locate the "unborn" patient, thus advancing the field and playing a key role in the evolution of fetal surgery (Blizzard 2007; Casper 1998). Critics debate benefits vis-à-vis measurable risks, yet ultrasound has become a normal, even highly anticipated part of prenatal care in the United States, offering pregnant women their first "baby" snapshots to hang on the refrigerator (Taylor 2000). Ultrasound has significantly transformed medical practice, creating new forms of work (e.g., increasing the need for sonographers) across the past half-century; making possible new cultural meanings of fetuses, pregnancy, personhood, life, and patienthood; and altering public and private perceptions of what "good" mothers should do (e.g., abstain from alcohol, certain recreational activities, and sex) (Burri and Dumit 2008; Casper 1998; Oakley 1984; Taylor 2008).

In the new millennium, other technologies have become part of medical practice, transforming routine procedures, shifting contexts of care, and generating new meanings of expertise. For example, health care systems have increasingly relied on the Internet to connect patients and doctors across long (and even short) distances. Hospitals of all sizes and resource levels use electronic medical records to store patient information and log medical records, prognoses, and outcomes. These records have multiple uses beyond simple recordkeeping. For example, genome-wide association studies integrate genetic information from patients with de-identified medical records in a search for correlations between certain genetic profiles and disease (Roden et al. 2008). Biobanking-the establishment of repositories of human biological material—is also changing medical practice, providing new forms of bio-data for clinical research and practice (Gottweis and Petersen 2008). Research on attitudes toward DNA biobanking found widespread support among a sample of patients (Pulley et al. 2008).

Such examples of technoscientific developments — from MRI (Joyce 2008) to personalized medicine (Hedgecoe 2004)—can be seen across health care delivery and research infrastructures. Of course, as with women's health care described above, these "advances" are stratified in their application: Elites everywhere receive "too much" boutique care, while impoverished people in both the global North and South lack even the most basic levels of nutrition and hygiene.

Reconfigurations of Human Bodies

Medicine in the early- to mid-twentieth century could be characterized by a mechanical notion of widespread application of technologies to human bodies and use of technical objects on bodies. Such technologies, many innovated in military contexts, unquestionably affected bodies, as they were designed to do, with the aim of improving human health. Serlin (2004), for example, nimbly traces the origins and impacts of an "engineering" model in postwar America that resulted in new cultural meanings of the prosthetic and collective recognition of

our "replaceable" body parts. Yet a key shift in medical technology has been the introduction of novel pills, devices, and other objects, both small and large, which remake bodies, often from the inside out. Clarke (1995) described this move from technologies of control to technologies of transformation, marking an epochal shift from the "modern" to the "postmodern" period. These technical practices have produced variations in bodies across time and space, alongside new epistemological frameworks.

In 1989, Nelkin and Tancredi (1989) documented, in vaguely alarmist prose, the rise of "dangerous diagnostics" - a set of technologies, such as genetic testing for possible future maladies and IQ tests, that increasingly pervaded the social sphere and threatened individual bodies and rights. They analyzed genetic technologies and biological information in social context, but they did not delve into the historical and cultural configurations of the technologies themselves, or their impacts, on bodies. One such "dangerous diagnostic" is amniocentesis. As Rothman (1993) argued, use of this prenatal test spurred a new ontological embodied category, the "tentative pregnancy." She found that until a negative test result proved optimal health of a fetus, pregnant women could not fully accept their pregnancies. On the other hand, a positive diagnosis of genetic aberration created moral and bodily dilemmas; in the absence of prenatal treatment options and/or counseling, women with "defective" fetuses were confronted with the hollow "choice" of abortion. Rapp (2000) later explored these dynamics among a more ethnically and economically diverse group of women, finding a more intricate set of embodied politics.

Duster ([1990] 2003) presented a nuanced analysis of genetic technologies and risks posed to civil liberties and bodies by recycled explanations of science, heredity, and race. He suggested that genetic information reproduces structural inequalities, thus diluting any potential impact toward alleviation of human suffering. In Duster's story, the technologies have both histories and politics, as do the humans. In 2004, Hedgecoe offered an ethnographic account of genetics in practice, documenting the ascendance of personalized medicine and its impact on patients and practices. Wailoo and Pemberton (2006) then placed race, ethnicity, and racialized bodies front and center in their historical analysis of Tay-Sachs, cystic fibrosis, and siekle cell disease.

One of the most startling and instructive examples of old and very new technologies reshaping human bodies and lives is that of pharmaceuticals.

A special issue of Sociology of Health and Illness (Williams, Gabe, and Davis 2008) explored multifaceted issues including direct-to-consumer advertising, sleep drugs, the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, antiretroviral therapy, and stem cells. For example, Casper and Carpenter (2008) showed, with respect to the innovative and controversial HPV vaccine, that new technologies transform clinical practices: "the vaccine reveals gendered aspects of the doctor-patient relationship while creating new categories of patients and new pathways to medicalization of girls' bodies. . . . New drugs may reorder or forge new health-care practices and markets" (p. 890). These transnational dynamics are increasingly played out on the bodies of women in developing nations, often those women most desperately in need of new preventive and healing technologies (Carpenter and Casper 2009).

Similarly, in their landmark volume, anthropologists Petryna, Lakoff, and Kleinman (2006) describe the state of affairs:

Major pharmaceutical breakthroughs occurred during and after World War II . . . After the war, the industry used sophisticated marketing methods to transform from a commodity chemicals business . . . to one heavily concentrated in several large firms and dependent on large investments in research and marketing. Global pharmaceutical spending reached almost \$500 billion in 2003; approximately half of that was attributed to the United States and Canada." (p. 2)

As they also note, however, "behind these figures lies a morass of economic and moral paradoxes" (p. 2).

Biehl (2006) highlights such paradoxes in his investigation of the AIDS Program in Brazil, where state-supported production of antiretroviral medication has become a key strategy for controlling the epidemic. Drawing on ethnography geared toward making visible the "people missing in official data," he writes that "Brazil's policy of biotechnology for the people has dramatically reduced AIDS mortality and improved the quality of life for the patients covered" (p. 236).

Abundantly clear in the literature on pharmaceuticals is their profound impact on human bodies and experiences. Lakoff's (2005) compelling ethnography of mental illness showcases the transformative role of the multinational pharmaceutical industry in forging connections across psychiatric diagnostic categories in the United States and Argentina. In

order for future pharmaceutical treatments to apply worldwide, the classification of bipolar disorder had to be standardized. The patients who populate the Buenos Aires clinic in Lakoff's study must negotiate the complex intersections of embodied personhood with "expert" medical knowledge, and of local experience with global formations. Lakoff's (2008) more recent work follows "pharmaceutical circuits" of regulation, technical standards, and struggles over inclusion and exclusion in finding the "right patients" for pharmaceutical clinical trials. Greene (2007) similarly argues that increasing reliance on measures such as blood pressure or cholesterol levels turns people without illnesses into those with "pre-disease" that doctors may feel obligated to treat.

One result of this over-reliance on tests is that drugs for the management of not-yet-illnesses are continuously used in human bodies, requiring ongoing monitoring and adjustment. Lovell (2006) states, "The history of buprenorphine, like that of psychotropics more generally, is a narrative of effects in search of an application" (p. 138). To state this more baldly, the pharmaceuticals often come first via the operations of global capitalism ("Big Pharma"), and diagnoses and patients follow as drug-makers seek new markets (and bodies) for their goods. Biehl (2006) notes, regarding the Brazilian program, "as the AIDS policy unfolded, Brazil attracted new investments, and novel public-private cooperation over access to medical technologies ensued" (p. 237). These arrangements resulted in expanded markets for pharmaceutical manufacturers and a marketing support infrastructure for the supply of "pharmaceutical intelligence" and forecasting (e.g., Piribo Limited 2010). New arrangements have also led to intensification of clinical research targeting human bodies conceptualized in terms of disease or predisease categories.

Use of cochlear implants provides a fascinating example of technical transformations of bodies and ensuing social consequences (Blume 2009). Advocates for Deaf culture have vigorously opposed the technological "solution" of cochlear implants on the grounds that deafness is not a difference in need of intervention, particularly in children (Hyde and Power 2006; Sparrow 2005). For these advocates. Deafness is a source of pride, an identity with a culture unified by its own unique language. Like medical sociologists, disability studies scholars have contested the biomedical model, arguing that "disability" is a socially constructed category (Shakespeare 1998). The biomedical model

focuses on individual-level therapy and treatment, neglecting social conditions that lead to loss of mobility and social interaction that turns "impairment" into a disability. A constructionist stance toward disability has reframed bodily differences, such as deafness, to highlight abilities rather than deficits. Siebers (2006) has called for an embodied ontology as a theoretical ground for disability studies, echoing medical sociologists' call for attention to human bodies and embodiment.

In short, while we have learned much about how technologies remake human bodies, we need empirical and theoretical works on new biosubjectivities - work that can track formation of technoscientific identities alongside reconfigurations of bodies (Clarke et al. 2003, 2010; Sulik 2009). The questions then become bigger: In what ways, with what consequences, and by whom are these technoscientific identities constructed? In what ways and with what meanings and consequences do people take up such embodied identities? Sulik (2009), for example, found that women with breast cancer diagnoses formed one such identity as a result of their immersion in professional knowledge, placing themselves discursively within this technoscientific framework, receiving support in this identity from the medical system, and prioritizing official classification over their own suffering. Future work might investigate, for example, relations between humans and their brain implants (Morrison 2009), emergent pharmaceutical relations, new "biosocial" collective identities (Gibbon and Novas 2008; Rabinow 1992), and social movements associated with technologies (Kenny 2009).

Technologies and Embodied Health Movements

Since pioneering work by Epstein (1996), sociologists of medicine have theorized and examined connections among health, illness, and social movements—what Brown et al. (2004) call embodied health movements (EHMs). These are social movements organized around health-related issues such as disease categories, access to care, illness experiences, and inequities. Regarding HIV/AIDS activism (Epstein 1996), diethylstilbestrol (DES) daughters (Bell 2009), environmental contaminants (Brown 2007), and other product- and practice-oriented movements (Hess 2005), scholars have analyzed connections between health statuses and movement formation, development, and activism.

Communities have emerged on the basis of biosocial categories, deploying technoscientific identities and knowledge (Bell 2009; Epstein 2008). Scholars have analyzed novel group formations and strategies using terms such as "biosociality," "biological citizenship," and others that are Foucauldian in their understandings of power and dominance (Petryna 2002; Rabinow and Rose 2006; Rose and Novas 2005).

Klawiter's (2008) work on breast cancer, for example, shows how the breast cancer movement transformed fundamental terms of debate about the condition; coalitions of women, researchers, and funding agencies reshaped the landscape of scientific inquiry and lived experiences. Breast cancer has been transformed from an embodied experience of passive patienthood to active identification and solidarity with others, from victim to survivor. This solidarity, in turn, helps individuals take control of their health care decisions, while it also attempts to direct research funding at the federal level. Yet contestation surrounds the prioritizing of research on breast cancer treatment (including pharmaceuticals) at the expense of prevention (Ehrenreich 2001; Ley 2009). Screening mammographies had long been recommended for even very young women, enlarging the population of women considered "at risk" but who had not yet been diagnosed with cancer. New guidelines issued in 2009 by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommended limiting routine mammography to women over 50 (Mandelblatt et al. 2009), sparking a firestorm of controversy (Rabin 2009).

Central to Klawiter's analysis, and to other work on breast cancer (e.g., Fosket 2004), is the figure of the "risky subject"- the woman who may carry a genetic marker predisposing her to breast cancer. Kenny's (2009) work on the "previvor" movement is one example of breast cancer activism that emerged from groups of women with the BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene mutations seeking support based on the knowledge that they are at greater risk for breast cancer. Previvors are women with the BRCA 1 and 2 genes but without the disease; marked with the "pre-disease," these women may ultimately make significant treatment decisions in the absence of actual symptoms (Koenig et al. 1998). This group of women is one of many who are advocating for research on young girls, seeking environmental causes for genetic variations even before birth (Ley 2009; Thomson 2009).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

What implications derive from this retrospective of a half-century of research on technology? Although policy has not been an explicit focus of the analyses discussed here, many of the works implicitly urge policy at local, national, and transnational levels. We want to stress that medical sociologists should continue to engage in critical analysis of medical practices and health policy (Harrington and Estes 2007; Mechanic 2007). Often this work takes the form of health disparities or health services research (e.g., Barr 2008); yet other fields in the discipline have much to offer. Medical sociologists interested in the effects of medical technology might, for example, examine the ways in which technologies such as electronic medical records, disease classification systems, and other artifacts and processes create and obscure certain forms of professional and lay work.

While medical sociologists will, of course, continue to produce intellectually rigorous, critical, and creative accounts of historical and contemporary medical practices, we also envision more sophisticated interdisciplinary work in the future. In forging links with bioethics and neuroethics, for example, medical sociologists may highlight inequities in resource allocation, informed consent, and institutional structures that obscure or make invisible the ethical practices of those who engage in medical work. Some sociologists practice "empirical bioethics" (De-Vries and Kim 2008; Fisher 2009) while wearing the hat of faculty members in interdisciplinary academic centers for bioethics. These connections will become more important as new technologies enter the biomedical landscape, forging shifts in practice, innovative embodied identities, and as-yet-unknown social movements. As technologies become ever tinier—for example, nanotechnologies- scholars will need to attend to a host of issues concerning bodily integrity and autonomy, civil liberties, and the inner and outer reaches of medicine.

Medical sociologists play a substantial role in analyzing power relations within medicine, including the scope of medical authority, biopolitics, and health policy. Experts on medical technology should engage here as well. Despite passage of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in March 2010, vociferous debates over health care reform in the United States continue at the time of this writing. Medical sociologists are poised to

make key contributions to these debates, with the expertise to highlight connections between health economics and finance and inequalities in provision of services. Yet health disparities are not merely economic, in terms of too much or too little care; they also embody questions of social justice in distributing social resources. In an era when Americans spend too much money for care that is not equitably distributed, sociologists may highlight moral and ethical dimensions of this unequal distribution. Fears of rationing contribute to both public panie and political posturing instead of meaningful comparative analysis. Sociologists can contribute through studies of public and political discourse around policy change, as well as through empirical studies comparing health care systems locally, regionally, and nationally.

Additional research should be conducted transnationally and in dialogue with human rights theory and praxis (Gruskin 2006; Turner 2006). In the context of global flows of capital, bodies, and other resources, how do medical technologies, and the expertise it takes to use them, become distributed throughout the world? Who does what kinds of work, for whom, and with what consequences? What kinds of inequalities are created when MRI seans, x-rays, and other tests and techniques are performed in one location and analyzed in another? Some researchers have already documented the "outsourcing" of clinical trials research to the "Third World" (Cooper 2008; Sunder Rajan 2006). What kind of medicine do we get when drugs are created in the United States, tested abroad, and then marketed, sold, and consumed in wealthy nations? What kinds of technology do we get? Who benefits? Such questions of technology will continue to be at the core of medical sociology.

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Bios

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