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Exhibition Centre P/X001

'SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND HEALTH: A NARRATIVE OF NEGLECT?'

The thesis argued here is that the community of medical sociology has come to pay too little attention to its classical inheritance in general and to the study of the causal powers of social structures in particular. After some preliminary remarks on the conceptualization of social structures, passing reference is made to the point and thrust of the contribution of the 'greedy bastards hypothesis' (GBH) to the health inequalities literature. The bulk of the talk is then given over to a consideration of social structures around shame and stigma. The causal powers of these structures are examined in detail in the contexts of (1) chronic and disabling illness and (2) sex work. An attempt is made by this means to demonstrate the potential, as well as the constraints, of the explanatory capability of a sociology focused on social structure.