

**Exploring the Divide:  
Illness and Disability**

**Edited by**

**Colin Barnes and Geof Mercer**

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## **PREFACE**

The majority of the chapters in this volume are revised versions of papers that were presented at a conference - Accounting for Illness and Disability - which was organised by the editors with the financial support of the Disability Research Unit, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, at Weetwood Hall in Leeds on 19-21 April 1995. The intention was to bring together some of the key contributors to debates between disability activists and theorists and medical sociologists. The central focus was on identifying issues of central concern to what had increasingly become two competing 'camps', while also exploring areas of common interest. For the purposes of this volume, additional contributions have been provided by conference participants.

Special thanks go to everyone who participated in the conference for making it such a memorable and stimulating event.

## **THE DISABILITY PRESS**

The Disability Press seeks to provide an alternative outlet for work in the field of disability studies. The Disability Press acknowledges and draws inspiration from the work of all those countless disabled individuals and their allies who have, over the years, struggled to put this particular issue on to the political agenda. Its establishment is a testament to the growing recognition of 'disability' as an equal opportunities and human rights issue within the social sciences.

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## **CONTRIBUTORS**

David Ackroyd was, until recently, an Assistant Director in Stockport Social Services. For four years he was seconded to the North West Regional Health Authority with responsibility for Community Care Development. He is now working as a freelance consultant.

Colin Barnes is a member of several organisations controlled and run by disabled people and Research Director for the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP). He teaches disability studies in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds, and is founder and Director of the School's Disability Research Unit.

Marian Barnes has worked in both social services and university research posts. She has researched and written for many years on aspects of user self-organisation, mental health and community care.

Nasa Begum is a research fellow at the Policy Studies Institute. Before joining PSI, she worked as a Project Co-Director at the King's Fund. Nasa has a background in community care, policy development and working with disabled people.

Mike Bury is Professor of Sociology and Head of Department at Royal Holloway, University of London. He teaches on the M.Sc. in Medical Sociology at Royal Holloway and has published widely on sociological aspects of chronic illness, disability, ageing and cultural dimensions of health and medicine.

Liz Crow is a disabled feminist who has been active in the disabled people's movement for the past decade. Since 1987 she has worked as a consultant on disabled people's rights, particularly in the education, arts and media, and health sectors.

Judith Emanuel is a health promotion specialist with a particular interest in community and organisational development. She is currently working on a freelance basis. Her recent work has involved training, teaching and research.

Michael P. Kelly is Head of the School of Social Sciences and Professor of Social Sciences at the University of Greenwich. He is a medical sociologist whose main interests are chronic illness, the sociology of health promotion and post-modern social theory.

Geof Mercer is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Sociology and Social Policy and a member of the Disability Research Unit, at the University of Leeds. He teaches and researches in the sociology of health and illness, and disability studies.

Mike Oliver is Professor of Disability Studies at the University of Greenwich, and an active member of the disability movement. He has published numerous books and articles, and has also made many appearances on television and radio, on disability over the last 15 years.

Ruth Pinder is Associate Research Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Health, Brunel University, and Associate GP Tutor, Northwick Park Hospital, Harrow.

Tom Shakespeare is a University Research Fellow in the School of Sociology and Social Policy, whose interests include disability studies, gender studies, cultural and identity politics, genetics and HIV/AIDS, and film production.

Polly Shardlow was a social worker for many years before she became a researcher. For the past two years, she has been working at the University of Sheffield on an ESRC-funded research project looking at the self-organisation of disabled people and people with mental health problems.

Gareth Williams is Reader in Sociology and Deputy Director of the Public Health Research and Resource Centre at the University of Salford. He has written extensively about chronic illness and disability, and lay knowledge.



These famous people with disabilities have overcome them to become leaders in their field and make their contribution to society. Find out more in this post. If these famous people with disabilities share something, besides their professional success, it is their ability of self-improvement. The lives of most of them have not been easy and precisely because of that, they are an example and inspiration.

1. Frida Kahlo. Frida suffered polio during her childhood and, according to some sources, also had spina bifida, which caused dysmetria in her right leg. In addition, her spinal problems were aggravated by an accident suffered in her adolescence, which left her with physical issues for her entire life. Frida spent much of her life in bed suffering from (1996) *Exploring the Divide: Illness and Disability*. Leeds: The Disability Press, pp. 55- 74. *DISABILITY, HANDICAP & SOCIETY* (1992) Special Issue: 7 (2). *DISABLED PEOPLES' INTERNATIONAL* (1992) Proceedings of the Third World Congress of Disabled Peoples' International. Winnipeg: Disabled Peoples' International. FINCH, J. (1984) , 'The ethics and politics of interviewing women', in C. Bell and H. Roberts, eds.