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## *Uninsured in America: Life and Death in the Land of Opportunity.* Susan Starr Sered and Rushika Fernandopulle.

Krista Drescher Burke  
*University of California, Berkeley*

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tendency, dispersion, and statistical inference. The authors' presentation of experimental and quasi-experimental group designs is straightforward, departing from other texts in that the material is preceded by a thorough discussion of causality and research design rather than limiting the presentation of this material in the context of threats to internal validity, which is more typical in other texts. Another interesting difference from other textbooks is the inclusion of a section on ethical concerns in every chapter rather than devoting a separate chapter to the topic. This strategy relates ethical issues to every stage of research activity so that the ethical issues are given better conceptual foundation.

Culturally competent or sensitive research, while addressed in some areas throughout, could have been given more attention in the areas of sampling theory, measurement error, interpretation of data, and the role of social sciences research in society. While there are chapters on qualitative methods and data analysis, some introductory material about mixed methods would better represent the reality of most human services research, particularly in program evaluation. Occasionally some advanced topics, such as ordinary least squares regression, are introduced without enough preparatory information. Despite these few issues, the book is a concise introduction to research and a very good addition to the literature.

*Edward Cohen, University of California, Berkeley*

Susan Starr Sered and Rushika Fernandopulle, *Uninsured in America: Life and Death in the Land of Opportunity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005. \$24.95 hardcover.

Discussion about universal health coverage has been prominent in the consciousness of many Americans in the last few years. With a poor economy, the rise in low-wage work, and decrease in manufacturing jobs, the proportion of Americans without health insurance is increasing. *Uninsured in America* provides an in-depth look at the men and women in America who do not have health insurance and provides

powerful insights into the problem.

In their account, the authors focus on what they term the "death spiral." The root of the death spiral lies in the fact that insurance coverage is so strongly linked to employment in the United States. Economic forces—such as layoffs due to offshoring, starting one's own business, and family leave to care for small children or elderly parents—begin the spiral. As health problems go untreated, the more severe the problems become, and the more costly it becomes to treat, often forcing people without insurance to choose between forgoing doctor visits and prescriptions, or selling their homes or other possessions, with the possibility of homelessness ever-present. As a result of health problems and visible indicators of poverty such as obesity and missing teeth, securing anything more than the most minimal status job becomes difficult, and health coverage is unattainable. Thus, the people described in their book found work difficult to obtain and to keep, not only because of a lack of available jobs, but also because of untreated physical or mental health issues, and they found it difficult to make ends meet.

Starr Sered and Fernandopulle interviewed a wide range of uninsured Americans with many levels of education, including graduate degrees. Many were employed at the time of their interviews and some had the opportunity to purchase insurance, but for amounts that would significantly reduce their take-home pay, making it unaffordable. Others could not work because of untreated or under-treated health care issues. Still others had been laid off after plant closings, but their chances of securing employment again if the economy improves are slim due to health conditions that have been exacerbated with lack of care. They also demonstrate that adhering to the work ethic guarantees neither health insurance nor steady work and income.

The final chapter of the book outlines suggestions that have been made for universal health coverage in America, but there is no easy solution. The authors argue that the current system for the poor is not economically sound. Without access to preventative care, problems worsen until there is no choice except to visit the emergency room or receive other exorbitantly priced treatment, which may be paid for by Medicaid

or may never be paid. They contend that any feasible solution must sever the link between paid employment and insurance and must provide a minimal level of health care for all Americans, much as we provide a minimal level of education via the public schools. They argue that not only is this a humane way to treat citizens, but it is much more cost-effective than the current system.

*Krista Drescher Burke, University of California, Berkeley*

Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through 20th-century Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005. \$ 29.95 hardcover.

Since the invasion of Iraq by the government of the United States and its "coalition" allies, the number of books and articles on the topic of imperialism have proliferated, and there is general agreement in academic circles that recent events herald the resurgence of an overt and unabashed commitment on the part of the current American government to assert imperial authority over the nations of the world. However, many historians and political scientists would reject the idea that imperialism is a new feature of US foreign policy. Long before the invasion of Iraq, scholars such as Noam Chomsky and Chalmers Johnson had railed against successive American administrations that had both covertly and overtly engaged in political, subversive and military adventurism designed to undermine legitimate governments in other parts of the world.

Victoria de Grazia's book makes a significant contribution to the current academic discourse on imperialism by focusing not on its political and military dimensions, but on its cultural manifestations. For de Grazia, imperialism invariably involves cultural diffusion and the adoption of the cultural artifacts of the imperial power. She contends that long before the government of the United States achieved hegemonic influence, American consumer culture had infiltrated the orderly and hierarchical bourgeois society of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

The author examines her thesis of the "irresistible Americanization of Europe" with reference to a number