

SECTION THREE

MEDICATIONS, MEANING, AND PHARMACEUTICAL PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

Pharmaceutical related behavior is a subject of increasing international health interest. Anthropologists have conducted extensive research on medical systems. Much less is known cross culturally about medicine taking practice and the meanings accorded to medications. In this section, I examine the user's perspective of medicine; modes of paying for treatment and collecting a fee for curative services, and lay cost reckoning as it influences the practice of medicine. Medicines are assessed in a number of different ways. Highlighted are cultural interpretations of medicine related to their form and power, the processes of habituation and dependency, and the attributes of short term fixes as distinct from restorative medicines promoting health.

Social and economic factors contributing to the commodification of health are also considered. Increasing reliance on commercial medicine products for life's problems is viewed as both a feature of cosmopolitan life and a practice through which capitalist ideology is subtly embodied. It is argued that models of primary health care need to extend beyond the public to the private sector and address health consumerism.