

# SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH & ILLNESS

## Book Prize Winner 2003

The BSA Medical Sociology Group announced the winner of the Sociology Health and Illness book of the year prize, 2003 at the Medical Sociology Group Annual General Meeting (27th September 2003, University of York).

**Eric Klinenberg** (2002). **Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago**. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Nominated by Robert Dingwall

In July 1995 more than 700 people perished in a heat wave, making it one of the greatest natural disasters of American history. Eric Klinenberg goes inside the anatomy of the metropolis to conduct a "social autopsy," examining the social, political, and institutional organs of the city that made this urban disaster deadly. Starting with the question of why most victims died at home alone, Klinenberg investigates why some neighbourhoods experienced greater mortality than others, how the city government responded to the crisis, and how journalists, scientists, and public officials reported on and explained these events. Through a combination of years of fieldwork, extensive interviews, and archival research - and writing with much of the verve of an investigative journalist, Klinenberg uncovers how a number of surprising and unsettling forms of social breakdown--including the isolation of seniors, the institutional abandonment of poor neighbourhoods, and the retrenchment of public assistance programs--contributed to the high fatality rates. The heat wave mortality has as much social as natural origins. Working in the tradition of Emile Durkheim and Kai Erickson, Klinenberg's truly exceptional, innovative study promises to launch a new sociological research tradition that unites the methods and theories of medical sociology with the epidemiological research on social determinants of health.