
Reference and Research Resources for Medical Sociology, Medical Anthropology, and Health Psychology

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Understanding human health and healthcare provision is one of the most relevant issues today. The fields of medical sociology, medical anthropology, and health psychology offer unique approaches to studying human healthcare issues and their interconnections with medical, behavioral, socioeconomic, cultural, and international issues, among others. Here, Spencer Acadia provides detailed descriptions of these fields and suggests several books for inclusion in a variety of library types. He also describes the content available on the websites of many important organizations and institutions. In addition to a background in library science, Mr. Acadia has studied sociology and psychology through the master's and doctoral levels. He has taught college courses in the social and behavioral sciences and currently works as research librarian in sociology, psychology, and anthropology at the University of Texas at Tyler.—*Editor*

Within the larger academic disciplines of sociology and anthropology are two subfields dedicated to studying the social and cultural conditions of human health and medicine. *Medical sociology* incorporates a vast range of inquiry including topics such as socioeconomic distributions of diseases among populations; evaluation of local, national, and global health care systems; concepts of illness and sickness as forms of social control and labeling; and considerations of how technology is defining and redefining social and cultural archetypes of health, illness, and treatment.¹ Similarly, *medical anthropology* is interested in a wide array of sociocultural, humanistic, and historical interpretations of health experiences, constructions of medical knowledge, and applications of healing practices across time, space, and context.² A key element of these two fields is a clear recognition of the ways in which human experiences of health are influenced and interpreted by social and cultural factors.

Fundamental commonalities shared by medical sociology and medical anthropology are that they (1) question what it means to be “healthy” or “ill” based on variant social constructions and cultural beliefs; (2) explore, theoretically and empirically, the possible pathways through which social and cultural factors affect health outcomes; (3) seek to explain the many antecedents to and consequences of existing and evolving health norms, beliefs, and patterns; and (4) investigate topics in health and medicine through social and cultural lenses using quantitative and qualitative methodologies.³

Health psychology involves a variety of themes such as exploring how mood, self-esteem, personality, identity, and other individual attributes might affect health; evaluating

the role of interpersonal exchange, communication, and relationship development in improving and sustaining beneficial health experiences; creating, implementing, and testing theories of behavior and learning toward effective assessment of health outcomes and risk reduction strategies; and helping people manage and cope with the mental stressors of chronic diseases, lifelong disabilities, and terminal illnesses.⁴

Despite its individualist bent, health psychology shares research interests with topics in medical sociology and medical anthropology such as (1) biomedical explanations alone cannot account for the complexities of human health; (2) health is not merely the absence of sickness, but instead comprised of many interconnected qualities; (3) many aspects of health and medicine can be studied across interrelated disciplines; and (4) health outcomes and experiences can be dictated by macro-, meso-, and micro-level events.⁵

The knowledge of and insights provided by medical sociology, medical anthropology, and health psychology are a welcome addition to the librarian's toolbox. Students, faculty, and the general public may perceive health and medical issues in the domain of evidence-based biomedicine without realizing the social, cultural, and behavioral implications of and impacts on human health experiences. Conversely, some users may approach health from deeply rooted cultural and religious perspectives, shunning the cutting-edge science of today's advanced medicine. Library instruction in medical sociology, medical anthropology, and health psychology can assist users in making connections between these three subfields and biological and physiological medicine. In this sense, librarians act as intellectual catalysts—helping users realize that human health experiences are multifaceted and leading them to appropriate reference materials.

Librarians who are conversant in medical sociology, medical anthropology, and health psychology immediately become valuable ambassadors for outreach and liaison services. Librarians who are acquainted with these subfields can effectively reach out to library users interested in sociology, anthropology, and psychology *as well as* to those interested in health and medicine. Also, outreach may involve interacting with diverse or underserved population groups (e.g., women, racial and ethnic minorities, and sexual minorities). Medical sociology, medical anthropology, and health psychology teach social, cultural, and behavioral awareness and sensitivity. Thus, the study of these subfields provides distinct advantages for successful outreach to many diverse population groups.

Medical sociology, medical anthropology, and health psychology are interested in critical analyses of health and medicine that sometimes contrast with accepted health norms and standard medical protocols. As such, librarians must approach these subfields with open minds and a willingness to entertain social, cultural, and behavioral health pluralities.

In reality, humans do not experience the world in a disciplinary vacuum; rather, their objective and subjective experiences are built and rebuilt upon many varied social, cultural, behavioral, and biophysical foundations. The first step in truly understanding the complexities of human health is to

understand that health is a versatile concept involving innumerable influences both internal and external to any single person or group. More than 60 years ago, the World Health Organization understood health as an intricate collection of physical, mental, and social aspects.⁶ Plus, the history of medicine is full of varying philosophical beliefs and healing practices where human health has been viewed along multiple dimensions.⁷

This piece is designed to serve as an introductory guide to medical sociology, medical anthropology, and health psychology by providing a core collection of reference materials and websites. It is not meant to be a list of every relevant resource available, but rather aims to be a carefully selected cross-section of resources for librarians to begin exploring what medical sociology, medical anthropology, and health psychology have to offer. The reviews of titles and websites have been adapted from the author's website.⁸

REFERENCE BOOKS

Albrecht, Gary, Ray Fitzpatrick, and Susan Scrimshaw. *Handbook of Social Studies in Health and Medicine*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000 (ISBN: 978-0-7619-4272-6).

The 32 chapters of this title approach human health from multidisciplinary perspectives with a focus on social and cultural contexts. Coverage includes such topics as aging, chronic disease, disability, gender, health care policy, and socioeconomic status. Most of the book is easy to read, though some portions require statistical knowledge to understand. In conjunction with newer texts, this book is appropriate for a wide range of readers.

Anderson, Norman. *Encyclopedia of Health and Behavior*, 2 vols. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004 (ISBN: 978-0-7619-2360-2).

Across two volumes and nearly 1,000 pages, this set features a vast and varied selection of terms relevant to social, cultural, and behavioral health. Many of the encyclopedic entries are written in an approachable style and end with recommendations for further reading. Overall, this is a worthwhile set to include in any collection with a focus on health.

Ayers, Susan, Andrew Baum, Chris McManus, Stanton Newman, Kenneth Wallston, John Weinman, and Robert West. *Cambridge Handbook of Psychology, Health, and Medicine*, 2nd ed. New York: Cambridge University, 2007 (ISBN: 978-0-5218-7997-2).

Close to 1,000 pages in length, this title contains encyclopedic entries of words, terms, and phrases that regularly appear in the field of health psychology, including medical conditions and diagnoses. Also covered are methods, tests, and instruments used to assess health, as well as therapeutic and counseling techniques common in psychology. This title is designed for students and practitioners of health psychology, medicine, and related health disciplines.

Baum, Andrew, Tracey Revenson, and Jerome Singer. *Handbook of Health Psychology*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001 (ISBN: 978-0-8058-1495-8).

Baum, Andrew, Tracey Revenson, and Jerome Singer. *Handbook of Health Psychology*, 2nd ed. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2012 (ISBN: 978-0-8058-6461-8).

The first edition holds an impressive 51 chapters that cover a range of fundamental concepts, theories, and models. Also covered are many topics common in health psychological research (e.g., aging, cancer, disability, gender, and HIV/AIDS). The second edition varies greatly from the first and includes discussions on topics such as the roles of the family, socioeconomic status, spirituality, and sexual orientation. Users of these books are likely to be upper-level university students and should have some background in the behavioral and health sciences, including statistics.

Bird, Chloe, Peter Conrad, and Allen Fremont. *Handbook of Medical Sociology*, 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000 (ISBN: 978-0-1301-4456-0).

Bird, Chloe, Peter Conrad, Allen Fremont, and Stefan Timmermans. *Handbook of Medical Sociology*, 6th ed. Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 2010 (ISBN: 978-0-8265-1720-3).

The well-written, easy-to-follow fifth edition of this book discusses many foundational topics permeating the field (e.g., gender, health policy, managed care, mental health, socioeconomic status, and stress). The newer, sixth edition contains 25 chapters that cover similar fundamental material while including new topics such as the Internet, social movements, and spirituality. The content of each text is unique enough to merit having both in the same collection. This seminal title is appropriate for a large audience and is recommended for any library seeking to build a collection on the social and cultural aspects of human health and medicine.

Boll, Thomas. *Handbook of Clinical Health Psychology*, 3 vols. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2002 (ISBN: 978-1-5579-8909-3).

This comprehensive set is geared toward current and soon-to-be practicing psychologists and behavioral science researchers. Readers with a biomedical or biophysiological orientation will enjoy the evidence-based research and diagnostics presented. This set is a core title to any serious collection on human health and behavior.

Boyer, Bret, and Indira Paharia. *Comprehensive Handbook of Clinical Health Psychology*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008 (ISBN: 978-0-4717-8386-2).

Eighteen chapters cover the foundations of health psychology with particular emphasis on chronic disease prevention. Additional topics such as epidemiology, managed care, pain sensation, sexual health, and substance abuse are covered. This title is best suited for readers interested in the clinical aspects of health psychology and behavioral health.

Christensen, Alan, René Martin, and Joshua Smyth. *Encyclopedia of Health Psychology*. New York: Kluwer Plenum, 2004 (ISBN: 978-0-3064-8336-3).

This title is filled with 350 pages of entries related to health psychology, including some autobiographies from scholars in the field. The entries are simple and easy to read, making this book most useful for those having no prior knowledge of the field.

Cockerham, William. *Blackwell Companion to Medical Sociology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001 (ISBN: 978-0-6312-1703-9).

Cockerham, William. *New Blackwell Companion to Medical Sociology*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2010 (ISBN: 978-1-4051-8868-5).

The original publication includes 26 chapters on many essential topics (e.g., social stratification, culture, gender, and stress) commonly discussed in medical sociology. In addition, it covers a wide range of geographies, including some parts of the world that are not often included in many standard textbooks (e.g., Czech Republic, Israel, and Poland). The newer version covers standard topics (e.g., socioeconomics and health care systems), but also explores the social and cultural implications of bioethics, genetics, and neuroscience. Chapter 1 introduces the field of medical sociology very well. Other chapters require a basic mastery of sociology and some statistics. The content of the newer version varies substantially from the earlier version and both should be viewed as companions to each other.

Cohen, Lee, Dennis McChargue, and Frank Collins. *Health Psychology Handbook: Practical Issues for the Behavioral Medicine Specialist*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003 (ISBN: 978-0-7619-2614-6).

These 28 chapters discuss the practice and application of health psychology. Covered are areas of the profession such as assessment, intervention, and therapy as well as behavior modification and medication management. Special topics include medical ethics, cultural sensitivity, gender issues, and gerontology. This title is ideal for readers training for or just beginning a career in health psychology.

Ember, Carol, and Melvin Ember. *Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology: Health and Illness in the World's Cultures*, 2 vols. New York: Springer, 2003 (ISBN: 978-0-3064-7754-6).

An essential and accessible two-volume introduction to medical anthropology, this set covers a lot of ground—conceptually and geographically. It provides a solid, general foundation to the field, exploring global medical systems, political and economic issues, health conditions, and more. Volume 2 includes discussion of health and medicine in 52 different world cultures. This set is a recommended addition to any collection on society, culture, and/or health.

Friedman, Howard. *Oxford Handbook of Health Psychology*. New York: Oxford University, 2011 (ISBN: 978-0-1953-4281-9).

At over 900 pages, this title offers a comprehensive, up-to-date view of health psychology. The first two chapters are

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especially helpful in introducing the basic tenets of the field and its conceptual links with related fields. The chapters are well-written and reader-friendly, though some sections delve a bit into biological and statistical material that may be challenging for some. On the whole, this book is recommended for readers at all academic levels.

Gabe, Jonathan, Michael Bury, and Mary Elston. *Key Concepts in Medical Sociology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004 (ISBN: 978-0-7619-7441-3).

In an encyclopedic style, this text presents a selection of conceptual terms along with brief discussions of their meanings in medical sociology. Many common concepts are included such as socioeconomic variables, stigma, risk, doctor-patient relationships, and professionalization. Due to the brevity of this book, it is best used in conjunction with related materials and is recommended for readers at all levels.

Kazarian, Shahé, and David Evans. *Handbook of Cultural Health Psychology*. San Diego: Academic, 2001 (ISBN: 978-0-1240-2771-8).

The field of health psychology sometimes suffers from a lack of consideration of the cultural effects on human health. This book does well to consider this literature gap by exploring cross-cultural comparisons of health systems and behaviors, as well as occurrences of specific diseases among vulnerable racial and ethnic populations. Chapters are easy to read and suitable for all academic readers.

Llewelyn, Susan, and Paul Kennedy. *Handbook of Clinical Health Psychology*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2003 (ISBN: 978-0-4714-8544-5).

This 28-chapter title focuses on theoretical, methodological, and research issues in health psychology. Though social and cultural considerations are underemphasized, this book provides discussion on several unique topics (e.g., organ transplantation, chronic fatigue syndrome, and hearing impairment) not usually found in similar titles. Readers with a strong science background will make best use of this book.

Mullner, Ross. *Encyclopedia of Health Services Research*, 2 vols. Los Angeles: Sage, 2009 (ISBN: 978-1-4129-5179-1).

With an excess of 1,300 pages, this interdisciplinary set covers topics of interest across medical sociology, medical anthropology, and health psychology. Entries are well-written, easy to understand, and offer recommendations for further reading. Volume 2 contains a lengthy bibliography and web bibliography of additional resources. This is a great set for any library.

Pescosolido, Bernice, Jack Martin, Jane McLeod, and Anne Rogers. *Handbook of the Sociology of Health, Illness, and Healing: A Blueprint for the 21st Century*. New York: Springer, 2010 (ISBN: 978-1-4419-7259-0).

Throughout this book's 28 chapters, standard social and cultural considerations of human health such as gender,

health care systems, human rights, race, and ethnicity are analyzed. Newer, contemporary topics include embodiment, the life-course, and social movements. The writings here are more complex than in other introductory texts and are most appropriate for readers with a substantial background in medical sociology and/or medical anthropology, particularly with experience in theory, analysis, and critical evaluation.

Scambler, Graham. *Medical Sociology*, 4 vols. New York: Routledge, 2005 (ISBN: 978-0-4153-1779-5).

This set contains 67 compiled readings that have been published in other sources. In this way, the set acts as a reader wherein have been collected seminal and otherwise important texts previously published in books and journals. The level of reading difficulty varies throughout, but overall this is a good set to use in gaining a rich understanding of the field as it covers many primary topics (e.g., socioeconomic, disability, and health care policy). The set also works well as a reference resource for locating related books and journals across the history of medical sociology.

Singer, Merrill, and Pamela Erickson. *A Companion to Medical Anthropology*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2011 (ISBN: 978-1-4051-9002-2).

In 26 chapters, this title covers a wide range of topics (e.g., global health, war, reproduction, technology) common in medical anthropology. The book begins with an outline of theories and methodologies pertinent to the field and concludes with a look toward the future of sociocultural health issues. All chapters are well-written and easy to read.

Suls, Jerry, Karina Davidson, and Robert Kaplan. *Handbook of Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine*. New York: Guilford, 2010 (ISBN: 978-1-6062-3895-0).

This title contains 36 chapters on various topics such as aging, diabetes, emotions, health care systems, personality, and stress. Also included are discussions of the connections with related fields of study such as anthropology, genetics, psychiatry, and nursing. Though the two-column format can be confusing to follow, this title is very much worth reading because it includes several emerging areas of research (e.g., fibromyalgia and somnology), as well as a compare/contrast chapter on clinical vs. health psychology.

Suls, Jerry, and Kenneth Wallston. *Social Psychological Foundations of Health and Illness*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003 (ISBN: 978-0-6312-2515-7).

This easy-to-understand text is largely dedicated to the theory and research (both classic and contemporary) at the intersection of human health and social psychology. It takes a multidimensional approach to health by laying out propositions for ways in which humans receive, interpret, and process information toward health behaviors. Overall, this title provides a solid background in the social psychology of health and, though some portions of the text are advanced, most of it is accessible to a wide audience.

Sutton, Stephen, Andrew Baum, and Marie Johnston. *Sage Handbook of Health Psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004 (ISBN: 978-0-7619-6849-8).

Fourteen chapters make up this well-written book covering fundamentals, substantive health topics, and methodologies of health psychology. Although mostly easy to follow, some sections—especially chapter 4—are driven heavily by statistics. This book is rooted in the psychology of health and emphasizes social, cultural, and behavioral explanations more so than clinical biomedicine. Because of its de-emphasis on clinical aspects, readers wanting to know more about less clinical aspects of health psychology will like this title.

Weinman, John, Marie Johnston, and Gerry Molloy. *Health Psychology*, 4 vols. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006 (ISBN: 978-1-4129-2169-5).

This set is a compilation of papers that have been previously published in various social and behavioral science publications. A benefit of this title is that it draws together these papers into a convenient set of 1,800 pages of material in the field. Many of the readings are detailed and complex, making this set most valuable for upper-level college courses in psychology, medicine, and related areas.

White, Kevin. *Sage Dictionary of Health and Society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006 (ISBN: 978-0-7619-4115-6).

An ambitious work, this dictionary offers alphabetically organized entries on varied topics and scholars related to sociology, anthropology, psychology, health, and medicine. Although written in an approachable style, the book lacks some key terms (e.g., e-health, rural health, and urban health), as well as important contributors to the field (e.g., Arthur Kleinman, Vicente Navarro, Paul Starr, and Thomas Szasz). This is not a title to use alone, but rather in consort with other texts. Though it does have its limitations, the book is effective in providing quick information.

WEBSITES

AAA Society for Medical Anthropology
(www.medanthro.net)

This is the official medical anthropology website of the American Anthropological Association (AAA). The site contains short listings of graduate programs, journal titles, professional organizations, and more. Freely accessible are the site's blog, *Global Directory* database, newsletter, listserv, and a selection of university syllabi. This authoritative site is recommended for all users.

APA Advocacy Issues
(www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/index.aspx)

This list of 24 topics compiled by the American Psychological Association (APA) represents key areas of the organization's agenda. Many of the topics (e.g., aging, disability, and human rights) are related to the social, cultural, and behavioral aspects

of human health. The site is best used as a source for information about what the APA is doing to support research and policy for important health and social issues.

APA Division 38: Health Psychology
(www.health-psych.org)

The official health psychology website of the American Psychological Association (APA) delivers information about the activities and training competencies of health psychologists, as well as links to related organizations. Free access is provided to the Division's newsletter, as well as select university syllabi. Though much of the site is devoted to Division-specific information (e.g., committees and bylaws), the "Education & Training" section of the site is worthwhile to peruse.

ASA Medical Sociology Section
(www2.asanet.org/medicalsociology)

The official medical sociology website of the American Sociological Association (ASA) contains links to graduate programs, professional organizations, government agencies, funding sources, the Section's newsletter, and more. The ASA is an authoritative source in sociology and this site is recommended for all users.

BPS Division of Health Psychology
(www.health-psychology.org.uk)

As the official health psychology website of the British Psychological Society (BPS), many of the resources here are of most use to people studying and working in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. However, BPS is an authoritative source for information and its site can be used to better understand a non-US perspective of health psychology and health care systems. The downloadable files under the "Promoting Health Psychology" section do a great job at explaining the basics of the field in a practical, easy-to-understand way.

BSA Medical Sociology Study Group
(www.britsoc.co.uk/medical-sociology.aspx)

Another organization centered in Britain, the British Sociological Association (BSA) hosts an official website dedicated to medical sociology. The *Medical Sociology Online* e-journal, as well as the Group's conference materials and listserv are freely accessible. This is the premier website for learning more about the worldwide aspects of teaching, learning, researching, networking, and employment in the field. The BSA is an authoritative source in sociology and this site is recommended for all users.

ELDIS Resource Guides and Topics
(www.eldis.org/go/topics)

Created by the Institute of Development Studies, the Electronic Development and Environment Information System (ELDIS) website aims to provide information, data, and resources about global health and social issues. To this end, the topic guides are full of content applicable to international health with a focus on low-socioeconomic populations and

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developing countries. Thousands of research documents, datasets, and resources are freely available via the *Knowledge Services Open* database.

OECD Health (www.oecd.org/health)

An entire section of the official website of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is dedicated to human health issues. Freely available are many of the Organisation's publications, including the popular title *Health at a Glance*, the *Health Update* newsletter, the *OECD Factbook*, and more. Numerous policy studies, working papers, research reports, and books are freely available via the *iLibrary* database. Also, the interactive statistics database, *Stats Extracts*, provides data on a large range of social and health topics. The internationally recognized OECD is an authoritative source for information.

Rural Assistance Center (www.raconline.org)

The Rural Assistance Center (RAC) is an information resource and guide to rural health in the United States. The health of individuals, families, and communities residing in rural areas is often overlooked; this site addresses that gap by exploring the urban-rural dimension. It is best used as a starting point to understand rural health in the United States and why it is important. The site offers an introduction to the rural component of health under the "What is Rural?" section. Freely available is the RAC's newsletter, the *Directory of Rural Health Contacts* database, and a large collection of data maps. This site is especially useful for people interested in, working in, or studying the rural aspects of health.

SPN Health Psychology Links by Subtopic (www.socialpsychology.org/health.htm)

The Social Psychology Network (SPN) is a popular resource hub for health psychology information. SPN provides links to professional organizations, government agencies, academic journals, and more. The site is intended to be a guide to resources rather than providing primary information. Therefore, this site is best suited for users just starting to explore health psychology.

SBM Resources (www.sbm.org/resources)

As a clinically oriented website, the Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) emphasizes evidence-based information. Freely available is a selection of college syllabi and archived webinars. Links are provided to other professional organizations and U.S. government agencies. The definitions of behavioral medicine offered are useful for beginners to conceptualize the clinical aspects of health psychology. The site should be used in conjunction with other sites, not as a standalone resource.

World Bank: Topics in Development (www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/thematic.htm)

The World Bank (WB) is an internationally recognized organization. The site provides an alphabetical list of over 200

topics related to global development. Under the major topic of "Health" are listings of health projects, a database of health statistics, and an archive of international health news. Also outlined are the well-known *Millennium Development Goals* along with links to the WB's *Documents and Reports Library*, the *Open Knowledge Repository* of over 9,000 free publications, and free access to the popular *World Development Report*. This site should be one of the first to explore when seeking information on social and cultural health issues.

WHO: Programmes & Projects (www.who.int/entity/en) and Health Topics (www.who.int/topics/en)

These two websites hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) together offer 400 links to topics and research tools on global health. Numerous free publications are available including the *Bulletin of WHO*, *World Health Report*, *World Health Statistics*, and *Weekly Epidemiological Record*. Other freely accessible features include the *Global Health Library*, *Global Health Observatory*, *Global Infobase*, *World Health Survey*, *Health Impact Assessment*, *International Classification of Diseases (ICD)*, and *Millennium Development Goals*. The resources provided by WHO are fundamental in learning more about social, cultural, and behavioral health. The WHO is an internationally recognized authoritative source of information.

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