

some of the figures cited are still impressive in terms of richness. It is said that more than 30% of the flowering plants recorded from the entire country is found in Sikkim and 40% of the total avifauna of the country uses Sikkim as its habitat. Although entomology, in general, is a relatively ignored field, as many as 5892 species of insects have been recorded from Sikkim. The information given in this book indeed comprises a significant source for researchers, managers, conservation specialists and policy makers at large. The multi-taxa information presented is important since the focus of conservation biologists is not primarily on the persistence of a single species, but on all forms of extant life.

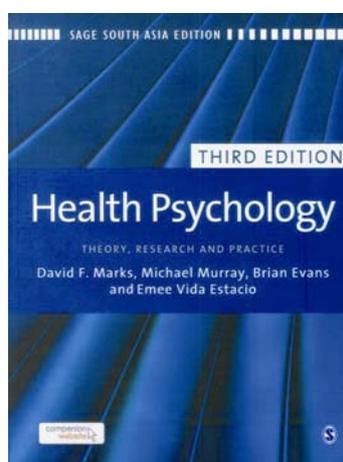
The book with an impressive coverage of information in one compact form could, however, be better presented for future use as a source material. It is really surprising not to see references listed either as part of each article or in a consolidated form at the end of the book. Thus the value of the book as a scientific source has been diminished by omission of the reference section. Further, the book is not user-friendly due to its form and size. It is too bulky, heavy (about 3 kg in weight) to carry around and difficult to read. It also seems that the sequence of articles and presentation were not adequately planned. There is an issue of repetition on describing Sikkim in almost all the articles. This has resulted in substantial duplication of information. Likewise, there is an issue of consistency in quality and content of the articles. Some of the articles are more systematically presented with good science, while the others are generic. In addition, there is no consistency in the coverage of in-depth studies to represent the entire state; articles have either considered one or two protected areas, or have covered a few focus species or a group of species. Effectiveness of various protected areas in encompassing and maintaining biodiversity has not been discussed. The book thus may be only a source of preliminary, though important, information for policy inputs; more comprehensive research and management plans for managing protected areas, forests and other resources of the state will be required.

The book has an enormous amount of data on biodiversity of the state which could lead to developing a comprehensive database having information on spe-

cies distribution, locality, status and uses. Nevertheless, as a whole, the book makes a good attempt to reconcile diverse and scattered biodiversity-related scientific information together and I am sure that, for those interested in conducting research in this state on conservation, this volume is a 'one-stop shop' and is worth purchasing for the library shelf.

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Health Psychology: Theory, Research and Practice. David F. Marks, Michael Murray, Brian Evans and Emeé Vida Estacio. SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, B1/I-1, Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044. 2011. xv + 597 pp. Price: Rs 595.

This book has all the components that are required to gain knowledge, to learn and to carry out research in specific areas that have hitherto not been explored in depth in the field of health psychology. It caters well to the needs of students of health psychology at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, academicians, researchers, paramedical personnel as well as medical professionals. Keeping the requirements of diverse stakeholders in mind, the authors have sequenced each chapter in a scientific manner. This makes the content more valid and reliable, and gives ample scope for further research, especially with inputs on the particular domain discussed, at the end of each chapter.

The entire content is presented in four parts, covering the major psychological issues in healthcare. The first three chapters under Part 1 give a good introduction to the subject and its place within the global, political and social contexts. This helps readers to go through the content keeping the demography of the place in mind, while understanding the causes and effects of ill-health of the population under discussion. It is interesting to read the outcome of the Whitehall studies, in which it has been stated that a combination of high demand and low control contributes to ill-health; control is less when a worker is lower in the hierarchy, and therefore such a worker is unable to respond effectively if demands are increased. The effect of work stress on mental and physical health is explained with other supportive research. It has been noted that racial discrimination, ethnocentrism, differences in socio-economic status, behavioural, personality and cultural differences are the reasons for poor health in minority ethnic groups. This provides a clear message on the possible policies to be adopted for improving the health gradients of socially and economically weaker sections of the society.

It is true that socio-economic status and wealth are strongly related to health, illness and mortality. In the third chapter, the authors give psychosocial explanations for these social variations. Through the next chapter on culture and health we understand that the end result has a connection to each of the practices discussed under the Chinese, Taoist, Buddhist and Indian philosophies of health. The dominance of the biomedical perspective is also discussed in a section on alternative medicine. It is interesting to know that complementary and alternative medicines are gaining popularity and respectability in the Western healthcare system. The authors have discussed the different health practices in different countries. This would help medical practitioners adapt suitable intervention strategies for patients from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The following chapter on research methods is sure to cater to the needs of research scholars, academicians and students.

Part 2 of the book is useful for all, irrespective of their profession, including the common man who is interested in learning about health. It presents authentic information arising out of research

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and case studies. Thinking, feeling and behaving are the psychological determinants of the quality of life that a person leads. The authors discuss how thinking and feeling influence behaviour, which has a bearing on health. They have evidence to suggest that excessive exercise can have negative health effects. The results of several comprehensive surveys indicate that moderate degree of physical activity has both physical and psychological benefits. The box columns in this part are sure to enable a quick grasp of the information presented and to kindle the interest of readers to go into the details.

Part 3 covers health promotion and disease prevention. The sequential form of presenting information is to be appreciated. With details on the place of study and demography, the authors have touched vividly on the principal areas of health experience and behaviour under food, alcohol and drinking, tobacco and smoking, and physical activity and exercise. They have also discussed prevention aspects under each chapter. In addition to the theories and models developed based on their study, they have mentioned other research work in the field. This speaks of the genuine interest of the authors in the development of health psychology.

The last part is the most useful one covering lay representations of illness and how they affect the personalities of people. The general tendency of most of the people is to go in for self-medication. The authors have used cognitive, phenomenological and narrative approaches to understand the lay representations of illness. This provides a comprehensive picture. The adherence and resistance to medicines by patients are explained in detail, thereby helping practitioners handle their apprehensions. There is a suggestion on patient empowerment through actively involving them, thereby making them feel more responsible for themselves. This part ends with the acceptance of chronic diseases and learning to live with them. The authors focus on some undesirable practices of health professionals in dealing with these patients. While in reality they are to be given more time, explaining coping mechanisms and developing confidence, most personnel spend less than a few minutes with terminally ill patients, leaving them with a lot of psychological fears and trauma. This chapter is sure to provoke

people to introspect. The information given is an eye-opener for medical professionals to understand the psyche of patients. The psychological techniques suggested would help counsellors and health professionals in enabling patients to understand the coping and managing mechanisms of pain and the stress caused because of chronic sickness. The required follow-up, with educational materials and regular telephonic contacts to improve compliance is aptly explained. The authors also mention the care that family members need to show the affected ones.

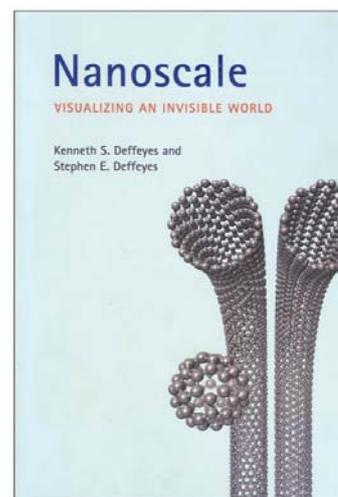
The aim of the book – in providing in-depth integration of qualitative, quantitative and action research approaches in dealing with better healthcare, keeping in mind that societal, political and economic changes are not keeping pace with industrial, scientific and medical achievements – is commendable. Each chapter speaks on the recourse to be taken keeping the societal, cultural and political imbalances in mind. The sequence of each chapter allows the reader to pick the area of personal interest and need. The recapitulation at the end of each chapter would be useful for students and academicians to review their understanding.

The authors focus on creating effective interventions for disease prevention and health promotion with special reference to sexual health, diet, smoking, alcohol, inactivity and stress. Each issue is addressed vividly with case studies, research references and empirical data followed by appropriate interventions. Keeping in tune with the idiom 'prevention is better than cure', the authors have adopted a preventive perspective with a focus on positive health enhancement through the use of multilevel strategies. Each chapter takes the reader through a journey of health issues, related experience and behaviour. All the major approaches to health psychology such as clinical, public health, community health and critical health have been vividly interspersed in the exclusive box spaces wherever the need to emphasize was felt.

I wish the authors good luck and many more research writing of this nature in future.

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Nanoscale: Visualizing an Invisible World. Kenneth S. Deffeyes and Stephen E. Deffeyes. The MIT Press, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, MA 02142, USA. 2009. ix + 133 pp. Price not mentioned.

In this book, a geology professor (Kenneth) and an illustrator (Stephen) have worked together to present the natural world at the nanoscale. It is dedicated to the memory of Linus Pauling (scientist) and Roger Hayward (architect and scientific illustrator). There are 50 chapters

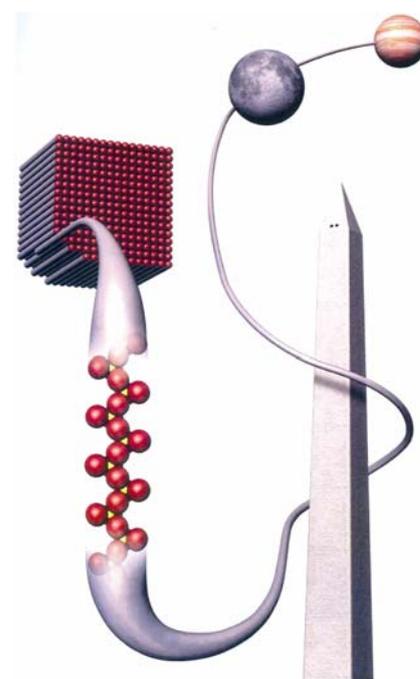


Figure 1. A 1 cm cube of pyroxene unrolled on a side into a single chain would reach from the White House to Jupiter – 10^9 km (p. 24; 25).