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# Medical Anthropology in Ecological Perspective

By Ann McElroy, Patricia K Townsend



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**Medical Anthropology in Ecological Perspective** By Ann McElroy, Patricia K Townsend

Global environmental change and recent worldwide infectious-disease outbreaks make the ecological perspective of medical anthropology more important a field of study than ever. In this premier teaching text, authors Ann McElroy and Patricia K. Townsend integrate biocultural, environmental, and evolutionary approaches to the study of human health, providing a complete and authoritative ecological perspective that is essential for interpreting medical anthropology. Research by biological anthropologists, archaeologists, and paleopathologists illuminates the history and prehistory of disease, along with coverage of contemporary health issues, both local and global. This sixth edition is thoroughly revised and updated, with expanded discussion on the interaction of environment and infectious disease; new material on climate change, globalization, and the effects of war on physical and mental health; and an entirely new chapter on ethics in community health and medical anthropology. *Medical Anthropology in Ecological Perspective* captures the essentials of the discipline—and covers its ever-changing topics, trends, and developments—in an engaging, accessible way.



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**Medical Anthropology in Ecological Perspective** By Ann McElroy, Patricia K Townsend Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #882965 in Books
- Published on: 2014-12-09
- Released on: 2014-12-09
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .91" w x 6.00" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 392 pages

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

"I have used *Medical Anthropology in Ecological Perspective* on numerous occasions and it is close to my ideal for a textbook in anthropology. Its perspectives in ecology, evolution, and biocultural interpretation are in the forefront of the biomedical and social sciences. I should be proud to have written it myself."

—**Michael Little, Binghamton University, SUNY**

"McElroy and Townsend's textbook is a classic, and remains the best overall introduction to medical anthropology available. It is engagingly and clearly written, covering a broad range of topics from biocultural and evolutionary perspectives. I wouldn't consider using any other text to introduce students to this fascinating field of study."

—**Katherine A. Dettwyler, University of Delaware**

"The ecological perspective has proven its utility for understanding health and healing across cultures and through the major health transitions. The new edition of McElroy and Townsend retains the classic ecological approach while updating and expanding treatment of the major topics adding illustrative and contemporary case studies; it continues to be in the very first rank of medical anthropology texts."

—**Lawrence Schell, University at Albany, SUNY**

### **From the Back Cover**

"Medical Anthropology in Ecological Perspective" presents human health and nutrition from a perspective that recognizes the overlapping and synergistic functions of biology, behavior, and environment. A classic in medical anthropology, this remains one of the fundamental texts in the field.

Dale Hutchinson, University of North Carolina

McElroy and Townsend's text captures the breadth and depth of medical anthropology, expertly weaving content with case studies. They carefully highlight how power and access to resources are fundamental concerns in anthropological and ecological approaches to health and illness. An excellent resource for students interested in biocultural approaches to understanding our current health and healthcare challenges.

K. Jill Fleuriet, University of Texas San Antonio

Global environmental change and recent worldwide infectious-disease outbreaks confirm the continued importance of the ecological perspective of medical anthropology as a field of study. In "Medical Anthropology in Ecological Perspective," authors Ann McElroy and Patricia K. Townsend integrate biocultural, environmental, and evolutionary approaches to the study of human health, providing a complete and authoritative ecological perspective that is essential for interpreting medical anthropology. Research by biological anthropologists, archaeologists, and paleopathologists illuminates the history and prehistory of disease, along with coverage of contemporary health issues, both local and global. This sixth edition is thoroughly revised and updated, with expanded discussion on the interaction of environment and infectious disease; new material on climate change, globalization, and the effects of war on physical and mental health; and an entirely new chapter on ethics in medical anthropology.

Ann McElroy is associate professor emerita of anthropology at the University at Buffalo, SUNY. She has done research in Nunavut, Canada, for the past forty-seven years and is the author of *Nunavut Generations: Change and Continuity in Baffin Island Inuit Communities* (Waveland Press, 2008).

Patricia K. Townsend is research associate professor at the University at Buffalo, SUNY. Her most recent book is *Environmental Anthropology: From Pigs to Policies* (Waveland Press, Second Edition, 2009). She has done fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, Peru, and at Superfund sites in the United States.

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## About the Author

**Ann McElroy**, Ph.D., Associate Professor Emerita of Anthropology, directed applied medical anthropology graduate concentrations at the University at Buffalo, SUNY, from 1985 to 2013. She has done research in Nunavut, Canada, for the past forty-seven years and is the author of *Nunavut Generations: Change and Continuity in Baffin Island Inuit Communities* (Waveland Press, 2008). Other current research interests include culture and disability, traumatic grief, and historical trauma in indigenous societies.

**Patricia K. Townsend**, Ph.D., is Research Associate Professor at the University at Buffalo. Her most recent book is *Environmental Anthropology: From Pigs to Policies* (Waveland Press, Second Edition, 2009). She has done fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, Peru, and at Superfund sites in the United States. After several years of college teaching, she has spent much of her career applying anthropology to non-governmental organizations, including church and refugee agencies. Her current writing projects relate her Papua New Guinea research to broader issues of human and environmental health.

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