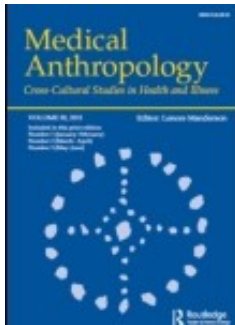


<http://somatosphere.net/2012/01/januarys-in-the-journals.html>

January's In the Journals...

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By Amy Cooper



The most recent edition of [Medical Anthropology](#) features work by Somatosphere contributor [Stephanie Lloyd](#) and Nicolas Moreau that explores [the meanings of symptom reduction and 'normalcy' for people treated for anxiety disorders](#). They situate patients' frustrated expectations for an 'ideal self' within a broader cultural context in which the desire to achieve an ever-elusive 'ideal self' is widespread. Bianca Brijnath provides a fascinating analysis of the relationship between [food, care, and pleasure for caregivers and people with dementia in Delhi](#), which parses out the different ways in which food and feeding are experienced as practices of care and love. This edition also features research on the [experiences of HIV-negative partners](#) in relationships with HIV-positive people, and on the relationship between [metastatic cancer and mothering](#).



Among the articles in [Sociology of Health and Illness](#) is an ethnographic account that [complicates biomedical narratives of obesity and obesity surgery](#). Also, Howard Waitzkin et al. report on interviews with corporate executives and government officials, showing how these groups describe their [decisions regarding public sector managed care](#). An article by Simon Williams et al. analyzes the connections between two emergent cultural discourses: ['neuroculture' and 'active aging/the Third Age.'](#) In doing so, the authors seek to explain how new understandings of and expectations for an 'ageing brain' are coming into being. Also in this issue is a study of [how future imaginaries are constructed in the context of assisted reproductive technologies and stem cell research](#).



Those of you interested in neuroscience, take note: the journal [Psychosomatic Medicine](#) just launched a special series called “Neuroscience in Health and Disease.” In the first article of the series, Tristen Inagaki and Naomi Eisenberger expand our understanding of [the mental and physical benefits of social support](#). Focusing on those who *provide* social support to others, they show that such actions are linked to neural correlates suggesting benefits for the givers as well as the receivers of social support. Also in this month’s issue is an research on how [high-stress jobs \(like urban bus driver\) affect our physical health](#), and an article that attempts to parse out [the ability of somatic and cognitive-affective symptoms of depression to predict cardiac events](#) in patients with coronary heart disease.



[Health](#) includes an analysis of [how the stigma of mental illness plays out among physicians](#) and forecloses on their own help-seeking; the author offers suggestions for ways to reduce stigma and increase access to mental health care for doctors. Also of note are two qualitative meta-analyses (or ‘meta-syntheses’). The first one looks at [the effects of complementary therapies for cancer patients](#) (finding, among other things, that patients benefit more from complementary therapies when they are seen to be integrated with, rather than polarized from, biomedical care). The second meta-synthesis by Jonathan Lamb et al. examines experiences of receiving [mental health care for ‘hard to reach groups.’](#) including homeless people and the long-term unemployed.



One of the articles in the [International Journal of Social Psychiatry](#) is a sort of 'Durkheim Revisited': Yur'yev et al. find that [across Europe, unemployment status is related to suicide mortality](#).

There's also an article on [ethnic differences in involuntary psychiatric treatment for women](#) in the UK. The authors found that black women were significantly more likely to be involuntarily admitted as psychiatric inpatients compared to white women.



In the always-fascinating world of medical history, the [Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences](#) presents a special issue this month on the intellectual history of medicine: "Each [article] shows, in its own way, how a particular disorder became conceptualized or how a particular set of difficulties was made into a topic of debate."

Articles explore:

- [the conceptualization of female same-sex desires](#) across competing medical fields in late nineteenth-century Europe
- understandings of [the 'culture-bound syndrome' koro](#) from the 1890s to present
- a reassessment of [shell shock](#) as a wartime illness experience and its role in the development of psychiatric knowledge and practice
- nineteenth century debates over [the possibilities for Europeans to 'acclimatize' to tropical climates](#). The authors explain how, "the influence of climate and the possibility of acclimatization became recurring themes in debates about colonial governance in both the Dutch East Indies and the Netherlands."

The open-access journal [Philosophy, Ethnics, and Humanities in Medicine](#) features some timely articles on the construction of the DSM-V. Kawa and

Giordano provide a [historical account of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders](#) and discuss contemporary concerns in psychiatric classification, the shifting boundaries of what gets counted as 'normal' and 'abnormal,' and the difficulty of delineating between "treatment, enablement, and enhancement" in the context of mental health research and practice.

Also, in the first of a series of reports in this journal, Phillips et al. examine ["the six most essential questions in psychiatric diagnosis."](#) They identify these as: 1) the nature of a mental disorder; 2) the definition of mental disorder; 3) whether DSM-5 should assume a cautious, conservative posture or an assertive, transformative posture; 4) the role of pragmatic considerations in the construction of DSM-5; 5) the issue of utility of the DSM (is it more for clinicians or researchers?) and 6) the possibility and advisability of designing a different diagnostic system.



Articles that came out in *Social Science and Medicine* this January include an analysis of [how American participants in randomized controlled trials view placebos](#). Among the authors' findings they note: "Some participants maintained a negative view of placebo effects (e.g. as illusions) that was apparently inconsistent with their other beliefs (e.g. in mind-body healing mechanisms). This may indicate a dominance of negative discourses around placebos at a socio-cultural level. Negative views of placebos are inconsistent with evidence that placebo treatments can have positive effects on symptoms."

Also, Wilches-Gutiérrez et al. conducted a mixed-methods study of [the relationship between death, holidays, and cultural conceptions of mortality in Mexico](#). After finding that people in Morelos, Mexico have higher mortality rates on holidays like Christmas and All Saints' Day, researchers conducted interviews with relatives of those who had died on holidays. They report, "Our results suggest that, in the studied region, death can be interpreted as a "beautiful process," and they explore the ways in which interviewees characterize dying on a holiday as a positively-valenced and special phenomenon. Also in the journal this month is a theoretical appraisal of [medical tourism](#) in terms of therapeutic landscapes and postcolonial theory.

AMA citation

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