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John Mirowsky

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Education, Social Status, and Health

John Mirowsky and Catherine E. Ross



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#File Name: 0202307077242 pagesEducation Social Status and Health | File size: 35.Mb

John Mirowsky : Education, Social Status, and Health (Social Institutions and Social Change) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Education, Social Status, and Health (Social Institutions and Social Change):

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Education forms a unique dimension of social status, with qualities that make it especially important to health. It influences health in ways that are varied, present at all stages of adult life, cumulative, self-amplifying, and uniformly positive. Educational attainment marks social status at the beginning of adulthood, functioning as the main bridge between the status of one generation and the next, and also as the main avenue of upward mobility. It precedes the other acquired social statuses and substantially influences them, including occupational status, earnings, and personal and household income and wealth. Education creates desirable outcomes because it trains individuals to acquire, evaluate, and use information. It teaches individuals to tap the power of knowledge. Education develops the learned effectiveness that enables self-direction toward any and all values sought, including health. For decades American health sciences has acted as if social status had little bearing on health. The ascendance of clinical medicine within a culture of individualism probably accounts for that omission. But research on chronic diseases over the last half of the twentieth century forced science to think differently about the causes of disease. Despite the institutional and cultural forces focusing medical research on distinctive proximate causes of specific diseases, researchers were forced to look over their shoulders, back toward more distant causes of many diseases. Some fully turned their orientation toward the social status of health, looking for the origins of that cascade of disease and disability flowing daily through clinics. Why is it that people with higher socioeconomic status have better health than lower status individuals? The authors, who are well recognized for their strength in survey research on a broad national scale, draw on findings and ideas from many sciences, including demography, economics, social psychology, and the health sciences. People who are well educated feel in control of their lives, which encourages and enables a healthy lifestyle. In addition, learned effectiveness, a practical end of that education, enables them to find work that is autonomous and creative, thereby promoting good health.

"Mirowsky and Ross have done the population health community a splendid service by presenting a compelling and complex story for the relationship between social status and health and identifying many important contentious issues for future theoretical debate and empirical exploration. I highly recommend [Education, Social Status, and Health] to all health researchers interested in the social and economic determinants of health and well-being." Gerry Veenstra, *Canadian Journal of Sociology Online* "John Mirowsky and Catherine Ross have made important contributions to this field, especially to our understanding of the relationship between educational attainment and health. . . . In this book, they summarize their prior research and venture some further personal thoughts on the connection between education and health. The result is a provocative review of the research and opinions of two leading figures in the field." James S. House and Brian Goesling, *Contemporary Sociology* "It is a systematic and comprehensive study of empirical research from two very productive sociologists." William R. Avison, *American Journal of Sociology* About the Author Catherine E. Ross is professor in both the department of sociology and Population Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin. John Mirowsky is professor in both the department of sociology and Population Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.