



Cultural Assessment in Clinical Psychiatry (Gap Report (Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry))

The Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry

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Culture permeates human activity the world over. In today's technological "global village," people from very different cultures are interacting more closely and more often than ever -- making it critical for clinicians to understand and incorporate cultural dimensions into their daily practices. This volume offers a contemporary pragmatic understanding of how culture is inextricably intertwined with mental health and mental illness. In Chapter 1, the 17-member GAP Committee on Cultural Psychiatry begins by discussing the history (particularly within the last two decades) and scope of culture in clinical psychiatry. In Chapter 2, the authors describe 11 selected cultural variables that strongly influence clinical work: ethnic identity, race, gender and sexual orientations, age, religion, migration and country of origin, socioeconomic status, acculturation and acculturative processes, language, dietary influences, and education. In Chapter 3, the authors present a brief history and detailed analysis of the Cultural Formulation, the newest instrument for ensuring thorough clinical assessments, explaining its clinical use based on DSM-IV guidelines. In Chapter 4, the authors integrate the 11 cultural variables described in Chapter 2 with the use of the Cultural Formulation described in Chapter 3, producing an extraordinary cross-section of case vignettes: * How the son of Irish Catholic immigrants struggles to reconcile old-country traditions with life in modern American society* The sometimes painful and always complex process and outcomes of acculturation for a Pakistani Muslim family who had come to the United States for only a temporary period but ended up staying permanently* Diagnosing social phobia in an Asian American, whose traditional reticence must be viewed within the context of Asian culture * Loss of country of origin and family ties as catalysts leading to significant behavioral changes and severe depressive symptoms in an African immigrant tribesman from Kenya and the cultural context of his recovery* The interplay of gender, age, and religion with developmental issues, personality organization, and symptom development for a "good Catholic girl" * The existential, interpersonal, and clinical experiences of a Protestant minister from predominantly Catholic Ecuador, who came to the United States as pastor of an Hispanic church in a predominantly white city In Chapter 5, the authors conclude with a summary and suggestions regarding the complex issues raised by a thorough cultural assessment. Enhanced by a detailed index, this powerful work meets the significant -- and rapidly growing -- need for psychiatrists and other mental health professionals to understand the role of culture in psychiatry and to integrate this knowledge into their practice so that they can provide the most comprehensive and useful care to their patients.

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