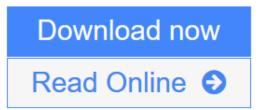


Ethnic Psychiatry (Critical Issues in Psychiatry)



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Today there is an overall greater awareness and acceptance of ethnic diversity in American society and a clearer definition of the United States as a pluralistic nation. The last U.S. census showed that well over 100 million Americans, white and non white, identify with an ethnic group. Ethnicity is indicative of more than the personal distinc tiveness derived from race, religion, national origin, or ge ography. It denotes the culture of people-that powerful yet subtle factor that shapes values, attitudes, perceptions, needs, modes of expression, patterns of behavior, and identity. From a clinical perspective ethnicity involves conscious and uncon scious processes that fulfill deep psychological needs for se curity, a sense of one's own proper dignity, and a sense of historical continuity as well. These functional aspects of eth nicity reinforce the notion that culture is of significant value to the quality of life and the mental health of all individuals. In the preventive and therapeutic sense, ethnicity sustains a capacity for coping with stress by providing communal support systems which serve to buffer the excessive indi vidualism, alienation, and anomie of modem mass culture. Hence, to ensure appropriate delivery of mental health ser vices to a particular ethnic population, mental health profes sionals must first become cognizant of the positive aspects vii FOREWORD viii and strengths to be drawn from a particular group identity and then incorporate these elements into their treatment strat egies or techniques.

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