

Head Games: De-Colonizing the Psychotherapeutic Process

Nikitah Okembe-RA Imani



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Head Games is focused on the way in which ethnocentrism and cultural bias can impact public health, and in this case, psychotherapeutic process. It examines a family therapy program being run by a major public university, tied to the criminal justice system and the educational establishment, aiming to reform perceived 'dysfunctionality' in homes of the 'patients (subjects).' What follows is a tragic comedy of errors in which theory and practice normed in one sociocultural context is applied, or more appropriately, misapplied. This book questions whether we have come as far as we think in the US in terms of calibrating our mental health systems for multicultural sensitivity and perhaps suggests there are limits to how much we can engage in cross-cultural therapy. The book uses an Africa-centered theoretical framework to tease out these systemic incongruities and will hopefully provide guidance for counselors, researchers, and those more generally interested in programmatic evaluation research across cultural lines. The title, Head Games, is an apt metaphor for the manipulation of the program by all of its participants for the purpose of reifying or resisting its inherent definitions of abnormality.



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