



# Extraordinary Conditions: Culture and Experience in Mental Illness

By Janis H. Jenkins

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**Extraordinary Conditions: Culture and Experience in Mental Illness** By Janis H. Jenkins

With a fine-tuned ethnographic sensibility, Janis H. Jenkins explores the lived experience of psychosis, trauma, and depression among people of diverse cultural orientations, revealing how mental illness engages fundamental human processes of self, desire, gender, identity, attachment, and interpretation. *Extraordinary Conditions* illuminates the cultural shaping of extreme psychological suffering and the social rendering of the mentally ill as nonhuman or not fully human.

Jenkins contends that mental illness is better characterized in terms of struggle than symptoms and that culture is central to all aspects of mental illness from onset to recovery. Her analysis refashions the boundaries between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the routine and the extreme, and the healthy and the pathological. This book asserts that the study of mental illness is indispensable to the anthropological understanding of culture and experience, and reciprocally that understanding culture and experience is critical to the study of mental illness.

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#### Review

"This extraordinary book will be relevant to all who are interested in medical anthropology, psychiatry, and health studies. . . . Highly recommended."

(*CHOICE Connect* 2016-05-01)

"Provocative and ethnographically rich . . . Her book and her arguments are of paramount importance for anthropology, psychiatry and public health as we struggle to improve care for people facing extraordinary conditions, and its encapsulation in a single volume offers an unmatched resource for teaching and research design in these areas."

(*Ethos* 2016-12-01)

"Comfortably traversing the boundaries between anthropology and psychiatry, Jenkins seeks to contextualize what is known as mental illness, taking it beyond the elicitation of symptoms to broader realms of subjective meaning situated within sociocultural influences.... This book is an intellectually engaged yet passionate quest to examine these influences in lives as lived."

(*American Anthropologist*)

#### About the Author

**Janis H. Jenkins** is a psychological/medical anthropologist at the University of California, San Diego, and an internationally recognized scholar in the field of culture and mental health.

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