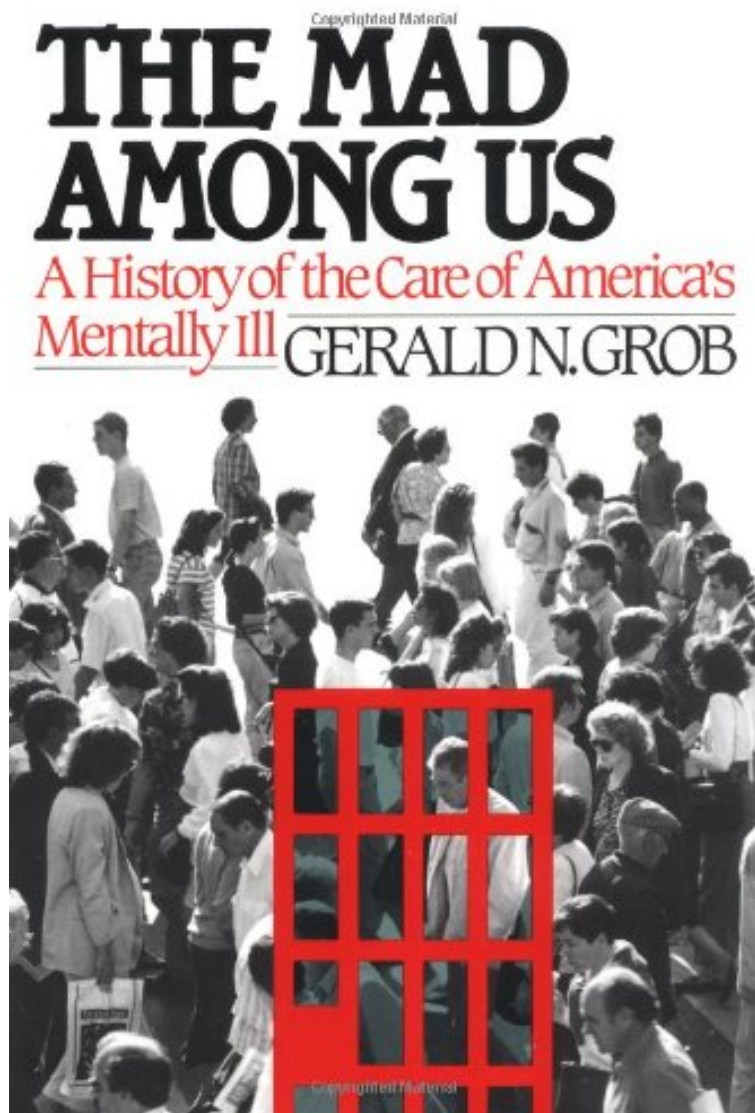


[Pdf free] The Mad Among Us: A History of the Care of America's Mentally Ill

The Mad Among Us: A History of the Care of America's Mentally Ill

Gerald N. Grob

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Gerald N. Grob : The Mad Among Us: A History of the Care of America's Mentally Ill before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Mad Among Us: A History of the Care of America's Mentally Ill:

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Americans want to be humane toward the mentally ill, yet we have always been divided about what is best for them and for society. Now, the foremost historian of the care of the mentally ill compellingly recounts our various attempts to solve this ever-present dilemma. In the first comprehensive one-volume history of the treatment of the mentally ill, Gerald Grob begins with colonial America, when families and local communities accepted responsibility for their mentally ill members. Their solutions varied, from confinement under lock and key, to granting mentally ill persons a wide measure of autonomy. As American society grew larger and more complex, the first mental hospitals were created to deal with growing numbers of the severely and persistently mentally ill. Grob brings to life the charismatic and innovative individuals who administered these hospitals and shows how they were successful at first in providing humane care and treatment. But under the pressure of too many patients and too few resources, the hospitals subsequently deteriorated into custodial institutions, and Grob charts this transformation. He traces the growth of the psychiatric profession, the change of the mental health field during World War II, and the use of controversial shock therapies, drugs, and lobotomies. Mounting criticism of some of these techniques and of mental institutions as inhumane places led to the emptying of the hospitals and a new emphasis on community care and treatment. Americans daily encounter the pitiful sight of homeless, mentally ill people in the streets of our cities, and wonder how it came to be this way. Grob shows that while many patients benefited from the new community policies, there arose a new group of mentally ill substance abusers who desperately need treatment but who resist it. He argues that these people, and not deinstitutionalized patients, make up most of the disturbed homeless who confront us today. Their presence demands new solutions, and G

From Publishers WeeklyA large proportion of today's mentally ill homeless are substance abusers, according to Rutgers University professor of history Grob in this comprehensive study which will be of interest to specialists. He outlines a "cyclical pattern" of mental health care "that has alternated between enthusiastic optimism and fatalistic pessimism." Grob traces the growth of psychiatry as a medical specialty along with changes in public policy and social attitudes. In colonial times families and communities cared for their "lunatics"; with 19th-century urbanization, hospitals began assuming responsibility for the mentally ill, torn between custodial and therapeutic duties. Grob records a post-WW II trend toward de-institutionalization and treatment in outpatient or community centers staffed by psychiatrists trained in psychoneurology and a range of therapies, including electric shock, analysis and medication. Today, the author notes, general hospitals and local clinics, overloaded by both the chronically ill and substance-abuse cases, can assure little continuity of care. Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library JournalGrob (history of medicine, Rutgers Univ.) chronicles the treatment of the mentally ill in America from the Colonial period to the present. This care has passed from the hands of families and local communities to asylums and finally to today's decentralized psychiatric system. Grob asserts that the emergence of a young adult chronic population has had an adverse effect on our current system of care, and he urges changes to meet the different disorders and needs of this group. Although his book is intended for a general audience, Grob's prose does not lend itself to this purpose. Still, since there are so few monographs on this subject, larger libraries may wish to purchase this work.- January Adams, ODSI Research Lib., Raritan, N.J. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From BooklistBesides covering the changes in attitude toward and the treatment of the mentally ill in the U.S., Grob shows how psychiatry has progressed from a close relationship with asylums to essentially a private-office practice. Moreover, he clearly sets forth the birth and development of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane (parent of the American Psychiatric Association) and related organizations, as well as of such lay groups as the National Committee for Mental Hygiene and the Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health. He limns the gradual change during the twentieth century from the mental hospitalization of the elderly to providing surrogate homes for them, and he places fads in psychiatry (dynamic, biological, etc.) in their historical contexts. Smoothly written and well documented, this is another example of Grob's gift for scholarly yet readable work in this important field. William Beatty