



Advances in Descriptive Psychology, Vol. 6 Clinical Topics: Contributions to the Conceptualization and Treatment of Adolescent-Family Problems, Bulimia, Chronic Mental Illness, and Mania

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This volume develops two basic themes, both related to the practice of psychotherapy. The first of these sections focuses on some conceptual foundations for clinical practice, the second on more "how-to" applications of these foundations.

In the opening chapter of part one, Holmes' elaborates Peter Ossorio's cryptic statement that in therapy we should "treat persons as persons." Holmes articulates precisely what it means to do so, and contrasts this with treating people as some sort of deterministic mechanism under the control of environment, biology, or other force. In the following chapter, Roberts relates some understandings gleaned from her clinical work with elderly widows and widowers who continued to "see" their deceased spouses, and who wished to make sense of this experience. The work explores the sense that these and other "companions of uncertain status" make, and provides understandings that permit a more informed and sensitive clinical approach to persons visited by such "companions." In the ensuing chapter, Roberts tackles a wholly different topic, that of adolescence. Rather than taking a traditional stage approach, Roberts focuses on adolescence as a time in which a person develops from a child whose primary status is in the family into an adult who, having acquired adult competencies, can take his or her place in society. In the final chapter of part one, Bretscher and Bergner describe their research on the factors that figure most prominently in selection of a life partner. In the chapter, they review previous research on the nature of love itself, and then report how the presence of the dimensions of love (e.g., mutual advocacy, intimacy, trust, respect, and exclusiveness) are far more predictive of mate selection than are the factors traditionally explored in the mainstream literature.

Part two of this volume, focused on clinical practice, begins with Bergner's introduction of an integrative framework for psychopathology and psychotherapy. Built around the Descriptive definition of the concept of pathology, the work shows how all of the major extant approaches to psychotherapy relate to each other, and in the bargain presents an integrative approach to doing psychotherapy. In the second chapter of part two, Zeiger uses Agatha Christie's famous detective, Miss Jane Marple, as the model for a particular approach to doing psychological assessment. The chapter demonstrates how this seemingly loose, intuitive, and informal approach is supported by a formal conceptual system, and articulates some of the features of this system. In the following chapter, Bergner and Staggs present a new and comprehensive approach to the positive therapeutic relationship. This approach, incorporating but far more elaborated than Rogers', is built around the assignment of nine distinct statuses to clients and the subsequent treatment of them as having these statuses. In the fourth chapter in this section, Wechsler, departing from the widespread view that mania is a wholly biological phenomenon, presents an interactive conception in which both psychology and biology play a role, and details some valuable psychological interventions for working with manic individuals. In the fifth chapter, Roberts, based on her earlier chapter on adolescence, articulates a therapeutic approach to doing psychotherapy with adolescents and their families. In chapter six, Marshall outlines both a new understanding of bulimia as a rebellion against a certain kind of alienating self-dictatorial regime, and the implications of this understanding for a wholly new approach to the clinical treatment of bulimics. In the

seventh and final chapter, Orvik presents a redescription of chronically mentally ill persons as "dropped out" of their various communities and, built upon this, an approach to treatment that stresses changing these communities.

On the whole, this volume presents an extraordinarily rich tapestry of clinical understandings and interventions not found elsewhere in the clinical literature.

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