

Theory and Design in Counseling and Psychotherapy

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In memory of Dawn Lewis, an active listener.

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PREFACE

"The only books that influence us are those for which we are ready, and which have gone a little farther down our particular path than we have yet got ourselves."—E. M. Forster

Theory and Design in Counseling and Psychotherapy introduces students to the practice of psychotherapy as informed by the major theories in use today. The word design in the book's title is meant to reflect the brew of intentionality, art, science, and constructivist thinking that animates good counseling. Graduate students and advanced undergraduates in counseling, psychology, social work, human relations, and other helping professions are the intended audience, having already gone some way down this particular path. This text provides an organized inventory of the major current theories of counseling and psychotherapy. Therefore, I aimed to include content covered in licensure, certification, and comprehensive examinations. Theory and Design also invites students to compare systems and choose which to integrate into their practice. This process involves not only content learning, but also some self-examination, so throughout the book Reflection exercises encourage readers to consider the material in relation to their own experience, often involving personality and cultural variety. These reflections can be collected in a private journal, with or without instructor monitoring. They can later be helpful when students write statements of their theoretical orientations, or when they interview at internship and job sites.

In the first three chapters, I cover fundamental issues in the practice of helping, discussing topics that apply to all approaches, such as why common factors bolster specific techniques, how theory necessarily underpins good case analysis, and what to do in facing ethical dilemmas. The other ten chapters take up major systems of counseling and psychotherapy: psychodynamic, Adlerian, existential/humanistic, gestalt, behavioral, cognitive-behavioral, family systems, gender- and culture-based, transpersonal, and integrative.

A common organization gives form to the theory chapters. All the chapters include

- An opening selection from a significant primary source, capturing the tone and style of original works in the area. Sigmund Freud, Carl Rogers, B. F. Skinner, and Aaron Beck, for example, write in characteristic manners that are lost in even the most artful summaries of their thoughts.
- Essential concepts, introducing the basic philosophy and mode of case conceptualization.
- A summary of how therapy is expected to progress across time.

- Customary techniques and research findings on the effectiveness of these techniques.
- Common uses for the approach, inviting students to think about how therapies match client problems.
- An example of a case conceptualization from a practitioner who uses the approach. This way, the choice of approach clearly corresponds with client characteristics.
- Critiques, giving an overview of the main objections to each approach, with counter-arguments if there are any.
- Media, Internet, and library activities to help students go beyond the textbook in developing a knowledge base. These are designed so that students can become active, competent academic researchers who know important sources in each chapter's area.
- A brief biography of a key contributor to the practice of the theory under study.

Interspersed among all these features are plentiful classroom discussion topics, class and small group activities, and reflection topics. These are designed to assist the instructor by supplying classroom variety, to tie theoretical approaches to practice situations, to clarify difficult concepts and readings, and to maintain readers' attention through self-referential exploration. Matters of gender, culture, and class are interwoven into the chapters, as recommended by the American Psychological Association's task force on diversity. Important research findings are integrated into essential concepts, uses, and critiques sections. I present key terms for each chapter with exercises in which students create and discuss the definitions.

In writing this book, I followed the suggestion of many instructors and students, and gave prominence to its readability and classroom-friendliness.

Supplements to This Text

Instructors using *Theory and Design in Counseling and Psychotherapy* will receive pedagogical advice and an examination item bank in an accompanying **Instructors' Manual**.

In a separate volume, *Applying Clinical Judgment*, Patricia Andersen and I provide activities to augment the main textbook. For each text chapter, we present a summary, key terms and definitions, and a quiz to assist students in studying the course content. Other distinctive features apply critical thinking to

- professional development (finding a balance between personal style and professional performance),
- case conceptualization and treatment planning (case applications—three to five cases for each theory, including some core cases that are used in several different chapters), and

reading in the field (research articles—reprints of a published articles exemplifying research related to theory).

The *research article* is a unique addition to this type of manual and focuses on developing students' abilities to participate in the profession as intelligent consumers of research. Many students reach advanced schooling without being carefully educated in how to read research articles, and we mean to mend this frailty.

A series of ten **Counseling Demonstration Videos** will be available for instructors and departments using *Theory and Design*. These 40-minute tapes show experienced counselors using identifiable theories in sessions, with presession and debriefing interviews that tie theory to technique. Clients and therapists reflect our society's diversity. In devising these videos, Lahaska Press surveyed classroom instructors and followed their advice about what will be most useful.

Acknowledgments

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Many reviewers improved the manuscript through their detailed comments, and their suggestions are gratefully incorporated in the book you are holding:

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Most of all, my art and reason in this pursuit flow from the thousands of college students who have graced my fortunate path and lit the way.

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CHAPTER 1

Effective Ingredients of Counseling and Psychotherapy

What Do You Bring to Therapy?

Your Inner Therapist • Your Internalized Culture • Your Systematic Viewpoint

Common Factors in Psychotherapy and Counseling Three Shared Components

The Therapeutic Alliance • The Healing Setting • Coherent Rationale and Procedure

Contributions to a Good Outcome

The Client's Contribution • The Counselor's Contribution

The Common Factors Versus Empirically Supported Therapies Debate

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"I'm too intense, or too sensitive, or something.... I don't know what. I just left my fourth good teaching position. With the first couple positions, I thought I had the bad luck of landing in places where I wasn't appreciated, but after this last time, I'm beginning to think it may be something about *me* that makes me

keep losing good jobs."

This is your client, Brad, on his first appointment with you. From your intake interview you have basic information on him that is largely unremarkable—no abuse in his past, no addictive behaviors, no suicidal impulses, no trouble with the law. Brad tells you that he has a great résumé (except that now it shows a lot of job-hopping) and that he is a talented and dedicated teacher. Yet every department he joins seems to disappoint him in some way—his colleagues turn against him, he has personality conflicts with his superiors, he doesn't get the promotions he expects, he is overburdened—and he finally leaves in a huff, sure that he would be invited to leave otherwise. He has usually gone on to a better job, hoping that this next one will work out. But it doesn't.

What Do You Bring to Therapy?

As Brad's new therapist, what are you thinking? If you had to stop right now and conceptualize the case of Brad (that is, fit it into a coherent framework), how would you look at it? The following Reflection exercise will help you understand the personal profile and scientific viewpoint that you bring into a therapy session. I will expand on these topics after you complete the exercise.

Reflection

No matter where you are in your psychological studies, start a counseling journal to record your thoughts and feelings as you proceed. (Your professor may make this journal part of your coursework, if time permits.) I will frequently give you questions to reflect upon; these are intended to help you discover your theoretical orientation, preferences, and talents. So, even if you feel totally inadequate for the task, take on Brad as a client and answer a few questions (there is no right and wrong here).

 Let's say that all clients appear for therapy because they have some conflict. These conflicts can be within the client, between the client and other people, and between the client and society as a group. What's your first inclination concerning the source of Brad's conflict?

Is it intrapersonal—that is, within himself? Does he sabotage his work life because he's not really sure that's what he wants? Does he believe he

is not really worth a good position in the world? Is he too anxious to act normal at work? Is every part of his life stained by his negativity?

- Is the conflict interpersonal, having to do with how Brad deals with other people? *Is* he too sensitive? Does he react to perceived slights from colleagues too angrily? Does every boss remind him of his overcritical, demanding father, and does he often react childishly when asked to do something?
- Or, is the conflict between Brad and society? Is there something wrong with the institutions he works in that makes him feel belittled and alienated after a while? Do the schools he works in pressure him to behave in a manner that rubs him the wrong way? If he is visibly different from the majority of people in the setting (in a wheelchair, from a minority race, effeminate), does this difference lead others to treat him as a lesser being?

As you read through your choices, you probably thought that you couldn't choose just one. Now give weights to the three choices—intrapersonal, interpersonal, and societal conflict—according to how you look at their contributions to Brad's problem. Make the weights percentage points so that they add up to 100 percent. Jot down notes that will remind you why you assigned the weights the way you did.

- 2. Let's say, furthermore, that successful therapy involves some kind of change in the client. At first contact, where do you believe successful change will lie for Brad?
- Thinking: Brad needs to change the way he looks at his job, his colleagues, and his bosses. He may have excessively high expectations for how fulfilling and perfect his career should be, for example. After four tries, he may go in with a pessimistic point of view that poisons the well.
- *Emotion:* The main problem is Brad's distress when he finds the job disappointing. He needs to learn to not take things so hard. Maybe he *is* too intense!
- Behavior: Brad is probably acting in some way that puts other people off. He may be bragging about his expertise, or spending all his time preparing his courses while ignoring friendly overtures. He may insult other teachers, or invade their personal space, or spit when he talks, or never make the coffee.

Again, after thinking about your choices, give weights to the three types of change according to the way you are understanding Brad right now (use points adding to 100 if you wish). Note down why you distributed points the way you did.