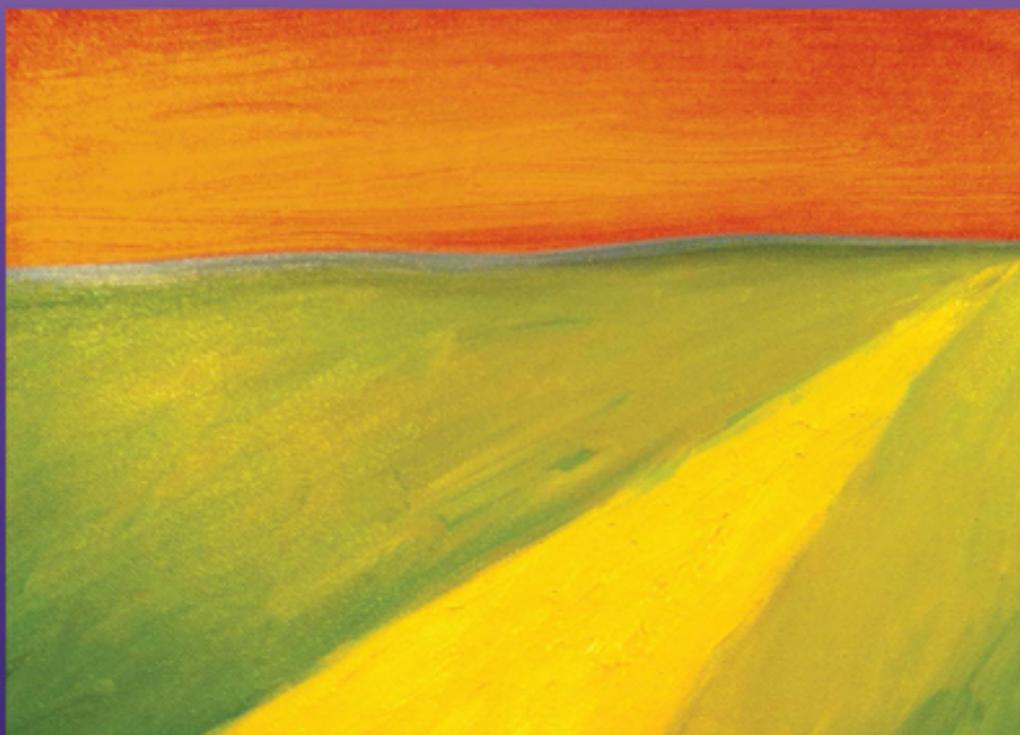


Psychodynamic Formulation

An Expanded Approach



The Psychodynamic
Formulation Collective

WILEY Blackwell

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To our patients

Preface

The year 2020 was an exceptional one. To start, the COVID-19 pandemic brought significant individual, community, and societal changes as we all faced concerns about health and safety, while also renegotiating our engagement with one another. In the midst of these monumental changes, the United States was forced to reckon with long-standing issues of structural racism and racial injustice highlighted by the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor at the hands of law enforcement. In this context, racial inequities were brought to the fore, highlighting staggering disparities not only in COVID deaths, but also in all areas of life including education, housing, economic opportunities, law enforcement encounters, the criminal justice system, and health care.

Systemic discrimination and implicit bias have left Blacks with inadequate access to health care and unequal healthcare treatment. Implicit and explicit biases have resulted in disparaged or ignored health determinants in minorities, leading to these being considered unworthy of study or omitted completely in research and clinical approaches.

Such biases have been reflected in prior editions of this book. They are embedded in the institutional and systemic racism present within our field of psychoanalysis and its psychodynamic psychotherapeutic treatments. We have undertaken this new edition to examine these biases within our profession; biases that have led not only to marginalization of our clinicians of color, but also to the prioritization of Whiteness, and to a lack of appropriately formulating the racial and ethnic contributions that are so important to the people we treat. Our patients come from

rich and diverse backgrounds and bring so much that is not often reflected in psychodynamic and psychoanalytic formulation and treatment. Additionally, we have not adequately considered and formulated the trauma, discrimination, and systemic oppression that individuals from these backgrounds have experienced as a result of their racial backgrounds, and how that trauma affects their view of themselves, how others perceive them, and their presentation to mental health providers. In this edition, we have attempted to highlight these blind spots, to place their evaluation within our field and with our patients front and center, and to give equal and heavy consideration to the impact of these inequities in a new and expanded approach to psychodynamic formulation.

Here are the highlights of what's new in *Psychodynamic Formulation: An Expanded Approach*:

The effect of culture and society - We feel very strongly that psychodynamic formulations must be expanded to include the larger influences of society and culture on the development of the conscious and unconscious mind. People who have good early relationships can, when subject to trauma, disadvantage, discrimination, and systemic oppression, develop difficulties with domains such as trust, self-perception, relationships, and adapting. People who may be privileged or valued over others by society can develop a distorted sense of their abilities, leading to challenges in navigating stressors or adversity experienced in later life. We have integrated Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems model (Bronfenbrenner, [1977](#)) into our organizing framework as a way of conceptualizing this, offering it as an idea about development on equal footing with other psychodynamic models. We can think of this as one way

of addressing the biopsychosocial factors that shape the development of a mind. While this book has been written by authors who live and work in the United States, we hope that this approach may prompt readers to consider the unique effects of culture and society on persons in their location.

Diversity and inclusion - In this edition, we use non-binary pronouns, replacing “he/she” with “they” for the singular and plural. We have written inclusive vignettes, while following current guidelines to only include demographic identifiers that add to the significance of the examples. As such, the vignettes vary in length. Some focus on a very specific point. Others zoom out to consider the full lived and layered experience of the person. We recognize that all readers and clinicians will bring their own assumptions, positionality, and lived experience to the vignettes. We have chosen to use names rather than initials for the persons included in the vignettes to bring the examples to life. Some of the names used might reflect the diverse backgrounds of persons in the United States. We have updated sections on attachment to acknowledge the predominantly White and western bias of the original research in this area. Likewise, we have also updated sections on conflict and triadic relationships to acknowledge the often heteronormative bias of early ego psychological models.

Conscious and unconscious - We believe that psychodynamic formulations help us to form hypotheses about the entirety of a person’s mind—conscious and unconscious. In this edition, we expand this formulation to discuss the development of both conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings.

Lived experience - People can develop conscious and unconscious problems and patterns throughout life—not only during their early childhood. We have added more on the importance of lived experiences, with expanded sections on trauma and adulthood.

Bias - We have added sections that acknowledge and discuss how culture, identity, and the biases of the clinician affect the creation of psychodynamic formulations. We have added discussions in several sections—including those on trust, identity, and attachment—that address how traditional psychodynamic concepts may be inadequate when creating formulations about people from marginalized groups. Acknowledging the diversity of gender and sexual development, we have de-emphasized triadic (Oedipal) relationships in middle childhood and their role in adult psychopathology. At all points, we have tried to move away from White, heteronormative, and ableist expectations, while understanding, in the spirit of cultural humility, that there may be ways in which this continues to be present.

Identity - We have greatly expanded our discussion of identity in this edition, given that it is the part of self-experience that relates to how we see ourselves in relation to our culture and society.

Defenses - Starting from the idea that all defenses were adaptive at one point in life, we no longer label defenses along the “adaptive-maladaptive” continuum. Rather, we discuss the benefit and cost of defenses, noting that this balance can change over the lifespan.

Values - We have added “values” to our list of function domains. We call this domain “values” rather than “super-ego function” so as not to privilege ego psychology as the dominant psychodynamic model, to

broadly address systems of right and wrong, and to include discussion of personal values.

The collaborative process - We create psychodynamic formulations *with* our patients, not about our patients. This edition emphasizes the collaborative nature of this process.

Expanded educators' guide and more suggested activities - Psychodynamic formulation must be learned actively. We have included suggested activities in each chapter so that learners can practice the concepts in real time. These activities can be performed by individual learners or in a classroom setting. We have also expanded our educators' guide to help instructors actively teach this important psychotherapeutic skill.

Whether you are learning psychodynamic formulation for the first time, or revisiting concepts that have become well-known, we hope that our journey of discovery may prompt you to expand that way you conceptualize your patients' development, and that, in some way, this contributes to diminishing the inequity in psychoanalysis, our healthcare system, and our world.

Reference

1. Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32(7), 513-531. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.32.7.513>

Acknowledgments

In 2020, the tragic murders of Black men and women at the hands of the police, and the resulting social uprising were stark reminders that structural racism remains at the core of American society. The authors of *Psychodynamic Formulation* realized that it was also part of the way we conceptualize and treat patients. To study and address this, we needed new perspectives and expertise, so we created The Psychodynamic Formulation Collective. In the midst of the pandemic, this incredible group of thinkers, writers, and colleagues worked entirely remotely to transform this book and to expand the way we think about psychodynamic formulation. We are:

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Susan C. Vaughan, the Aaron R. Stern Professor of Psychodynamic Psychiatry at Cornell University. She also served as the Director of the Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research from 2017 to 2022. She has special interest in LGBTQ issues and teaches about sexuality, gender, and the intersections between psychotherapy and neuroscience.

Many thanks to Susan Vaughan for creating the Margaret Morgan Lawrence Fund at the Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research, which supports psychoanalytic and psychodynamic education for trainees from traditionally under-represented minorities and to which we are donating all royalties from this book. Thanks to Jake Opie and Monica Rogers, our team at Wiley, for your enthusiasm for this project. Thanks to Anna Ornstein for her reminder many years ago that we create formulations collaboratively with our patients. Thank you to our families for lending us out for nights and weekends. And to Thomas Cabaniss for once again reading every word.

Finally, thank you in advance to our readers. We hope that *Psychodynamic Formulation: An Expanded Approach*

contributes to the way that psychodynamic thinkers and clinicians help patients in a changing world.

—The authors, January 2022

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