

Person Schemas and Maladaptive Interpersonal Patterns (The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Founda

Special Article

Emotional Control Theory and the Concept of Defense

A Teaching Document

Mardi Horowitz, M.D.
Hansjoerg Znoj, Ph.D.

Defensiveness in intrapsychic and interpersonal activities is a generally accepted concept among psychodynamic theorists, but a theoretically grounded classification of emotional control processes is needed. As a result of intensive case-by-case clinical and empirical studies, such a system was assembled. The system is organized by three major categories of processes that can regulate emotions. These are sets of mental operations that control 1) content of thought and communications, 2) form of thought and communications, and 3) person schemas that organize beliefs and interpersonal expressions. Each category of defensive control processes is linked to observable outcomes at intrapsychic and interpersonal levels. This classification system can be used to formulate how patterns of avoidance and distortion are formed.

(The Journal of Psychotherapy Practice and Research 1999; 8:215-224)

Defensive control of emotion is a classic psychodynamic concept and an element of case formulations. For decades, medical students and psychiatric residents have had to pass tests showing an ability to define traditional psychoanalytic defense mechanisms. Yet the concept is not fully accepted in nondynamic approaches, and defensive styles were not accepted, after controversy, as a part of the multiaxial diagnostic system in DSM-III^R and DSM-IV.²

One problem has been the theory of classification of defenses. A related problem has been the degree of reliability and validity of empirical variables related to the traditional definitions of defense mechanisms. A third problem has been divergence in schools of psychotherapy. The time is at hand for an integration and a revision of the theory of classification of defenses based on empirical evidence. This paper summarizes such a revision, and some of the evidence. It is intended as a teaching document.

BACKGROUND

Sigmund Freud and other early psychoanalysts developed names and definitions for defense mechanisms.

Received September 10, 1998; revised December 23, 1998; accepted January 6, 1999. From the Department of Psychiatry, University of California-San Francisco, and the Department of Psychology, University of Bern, Switzerland. Address correspondence to Dr. Horowitz, Department of Psychiatry, University of California-San Francisco, 401 Parnassus Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94143.
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Health. Other defense mechanisms were complex combinations of mental and social. By a third type of control, Steve could alter person schemas. ... from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Swiss National Foundation. in naturalistic data, in Person Schemas and Maladaptive Interpersonal Patterns. Handbook of psychotherapy case formulation / edited by Tracy D. Eells. 2nd ed. p . ; cm. fellowship at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Pro- gram on . D. Eells. Chapter 6 Cyclical Maladaptive Patterns: Case Formulation tant, and maintaining influences of a person's psychological, interpersonal. transmission of positive and maladaptive interpersonal behaviors, referred to as As this research specifically examined patterns in parenting across family CM is recognized as a serious public health problem in the United States, Horowitz (Ed.), The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation series on mental.

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