IDENTITY
and the New Psychoanalytic Explorations of Self-organization
Advances in science and the humanities have demonstrated the complexity of psychological, social, and neurological factors influencing identity. A contemporary discourse is needed to anchor the concepts required in speaking about identity in present-day understanding. In *Identity and the New Psychoanalytic Explorations of Self-organization*, Mardi Horowitz offers new ways of speaking about parts of self, explaining what causes a range of experiences from solidity in grounding the self to disturbances in a sense of identity.

The book covers many aspects of both the formation and the deconstruction of identity. Horowitz examines themes including:

- the sense of identity
- social learning
- biological learning
- identity and self-esteem
- levels of personality functioning and growth.

The book clarifies basic questions, defines useful terms, examines typical identity disturbances, and presents a biopsychosocial theory that explains how schemas operate in conscious and unconscious mental processing. The answers to the basic questions lead to improvements in psychotherapy practices as well as teaching and research methods.

*Identity and the New Psychoanalytic Explorations of Self-organization* will prove fascinating reading for those working in the fields of psychoanalysis, psychology, psychiatry, neuroscience, and the social disciplines.

**Mardi Horowitz** is Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco, USA. He is former president of the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis and is the author of numerous articles and books.
The basic mission of *Psychological Issues* is to contribute to the further development of psychoanalysis as a science, as a respected scholarly enterprise, as a theory of human behavior, and as a therapeutic method.

Over the past 50 years, the series has focused on fundamental aspects and foundations of psychoanalytic theory and clinical practice as well as on work in related disciplines relevant to psychoanalysis. *Psychological Issues* does not aim to represent or promote a particular point of view. The contributions cover broad and integrative topics of vital interest to all psychoanalysts as well as to colleagues in related disciplines. They cut across particular schools of thought and tackle key issues such as the philosophical underpinnings of psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic theories of motivation, conceptions of therapeutic action, the nature of unconscious mental functioning, psychoanalysis and social issues, and reports of original empirical research relevant to psychoanalysis. The authors often take a critical stance toward theories and offer a careful theoretical analysis and conceptual clarification of the complexities of theories and their clinical implications, drawing upon relevant empirical findings from psychoanalytic research as well as from research in related fields.

The Editorial Board continues to invite contributions from social/behavioral sciences such as anthropology and sociology, from biological sciences such as physiology and the various brain sciences, and from scholarly humanistic disciplines such as philosophy, law, and esthetics.
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Ever since Erik Erikson elaborated the conceptions of identity, identity formation and identity diffusion, as marking a major developmental milestone in the lifelong process of personality formation and maturation, imbricating in turn, in provisions and needs, with the successor generation, identity and its coherent formation or its varying deficiencies in formation, they have been a fundamental touchstone of psychoanalytic developmental theory. In this volume, Mardi Horowitz, whose professional life has been occupied with the study of personality growth and its intertwining with its deformations brought about by biologic handicaps and environmental traumatic vicissitudes and losses, has elected to synthesize his varying research themes through refracting character formation and its various malformations into illness development under the rubric of identity formation, ideally coherent and mature at its best, or impaired and disconnected, if unhappily or traumatically impacted.

This volume therefore encompasses the whole of normal development and the development of all the varieties of psychopathology and of illness formation, ranging from a coherent identity and a healthy self-esteem across the entire psychopathological spectrum from the almost normal neuroses of everyday life to the severest aberrations, the psychotically disorganized with what the author calls conflicted or disconnected identity and its extremes in severe narcissistic or malignant self-esteem. This is a way, not the usual way, but with telling vignettes that demonstrate a plausible way, to view the world of mental and emotional health and illness. And when viewing mental health and illness through the lens of the success, or not, of healthy, integrated and coherent identity formation and maintenance, the author seeks to provide the practicing clinician a guide to clinical therapeutic problems and ways to approach them in the ongoing clinical encounter.

Along the way, Dr. Horowitz separately devotes a three-chapter sequence to what he calls the “psychological learning of self-coherence,” a focus on the internal developmental process and the central formative social experiences with the major family and other close caregivers and influences, followed by a chapter on “social learning and identity formation” with the focus on the wider social-cultural surroundings, the space and time within which one grows and with which one is influenced to fit or not, happily or less so, but always formatively, and,
finally, the third chapter of this trio, the biological genetic coding that helps determine the direction and the physiological and behavioral limits of the evolving personality. The three chapters together present the overall summation of possibilities, influences, and pressures that interactively fashion the ultimate successful achievement, or not, of a secure, coherent, and healthy identity that is the desired outcome that this author hopes he can help the reader, or the successful psychotherapy patient, achieve.

Basically what the book thus offers is a variant way to view the overall human condition and its vicissitudes, using identity and its formation and deformations as the central looking glass, and this hopefully will prepare you to measure for yourself, the new value you find with this new psychoanalytic perspective on human mental and emotional health and illness. It provides such a fresh perspective for me. I trust that it does the same for you.

Robert S. Wallerstein, MD