

**The Theory and Practice of Mental Health Consultation, By Gerald Caplan. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1970. 397 pp.**

**REVIEW BY: Gilbert Kliman, MD (1972) *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 41:135-136**

Gerald Caplan has done it again. This tenacious innovator of community mental health services has now evolved a psychoanalytically based theory and practice of mental health consultation. In keeping with an increasing tendency of modern psychoanalysts to help community agencies, Caplan describes work in which the analytically trained consultant assists school teachers, nurses, and agency directors. All the psychoanalytic skills used when guiding parents in dealing with a family are brought to bear in guiding consultants to deal with their clients. Of special interest to psychoanalysts is the relationship between transference phenomena and consultant-consultee phenomena.

Caplan considers a mental health consultant task which until recently has been almost completely alien to most psychoanalysts: participation in the field of social forces. He suggests the consultant may have a role in the mediation between political action groups and mental health agencies. The consultant may also play a creative role by encouraging and even facilitating the expressions of persons whose beliefs require the destruction of existing social orders. While not taking a position as to whether such an alternative is most desirable or appropriate, Caplan opens the door for legitimate inquiry regarding the possibility that the mental health consultant may have a revolutionary role. The scope of applied psychoanalysis is indeed widening!

One of the most intriguing aspects of the book is Caplan's application of psychoanalytic theory to an assessment of mental health consultation effectiveness. Using a scheme not unlike one independently developed at The Center for Preventive Psychiatry, Caplan has introduced a statistically manageable judgment index. Using a modified Hampstead profile of instinctual manifestations, Caplan has independent judges rate the contents of consultation interviews according to the consultee's psychosexual theme level. Caplan further assumes that variation from this theme indicates that the consultation process has introduced a desirable degree of open mindedness and flexibility on the part of the consultant in approaching his client's problems. While this inference is somewhat distant from clinical operations with the client himself, which would be a more valid measure of consultation effectiveness, the method is a valuable and practical contribution.

This book covers principles of a much needed practice of applied psychoanalysis, one infrequently utilized and often involving a blurring of the analyst's personal identity. Caplan points the way for psychoanalysts not only to maintain their professional integrity and identity but to act more powerfully because of a respectful application of their most special roles and most profound insights. The reviewer emerged with increased certainty that the consultation process is a timely challenge at the frontiers of applied psychoanalytic theory and technique.