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Theory and
Psychopathology

Societal Roles and Schizophrenia

How context is distorted for and by schizophrenics

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The manifestations of schizophrenia, implicating the schizophrenic’s sense of rejection by society and the emergence of hallucinations as a basis for delusions, culminates in a subjective lack of context in terms of the schizophrenic’s world view. This lack of context is created by several factors. These factors merit exploration.

One aspect of rejection by society is the inability to accept and understand the perspective of the schizophrenic by others, and the inability to reflect back to the schizophrenic his own subjective “reality” by others. Note that the term “reflection” is used in the sense of therapeutic reflection in the Rogerian sense. Note also that, in order to be psychologically healthy, human beings require a context that is understood by them to make sense of their circumstances and their identities. These identities can be understood in terms of societal roles, such a family roles of “father” or “sister”, roles such as “friend” or “acquaintance”, or roles related vocation, such as “plumber” or “psychologist.” All of these roles create social contexts that make sense in terms of who we understand ourselves to be.

Schizophrenic individuals may experience as lack acceptance by family members, a lack of acceptance that may be real to the schizophrenic even though it may not be real to family members of schizophrenics. This may culminate in the schizophrenic’s sense of being misunderstood, lacking context and lacking identity. Friends and acquaintances may be baffled by the remarkable changes in their peer. Being considered unsuitable for vocational or occupational activity further deteriorates the schizophrenic’s sense of context and her sense of self. It should be noted that these circumstances of being perceived by others who are not mentally ill as inappropriate for social activity are particularly dramatic when one first becomes mentally ill and when one has her first breakdown. This will almost inevitably frighten the schizophrenic, and he may escalate in terms of his psychosis as what may be a long-term condition related to the diagnosis of schizophrenia ensues.

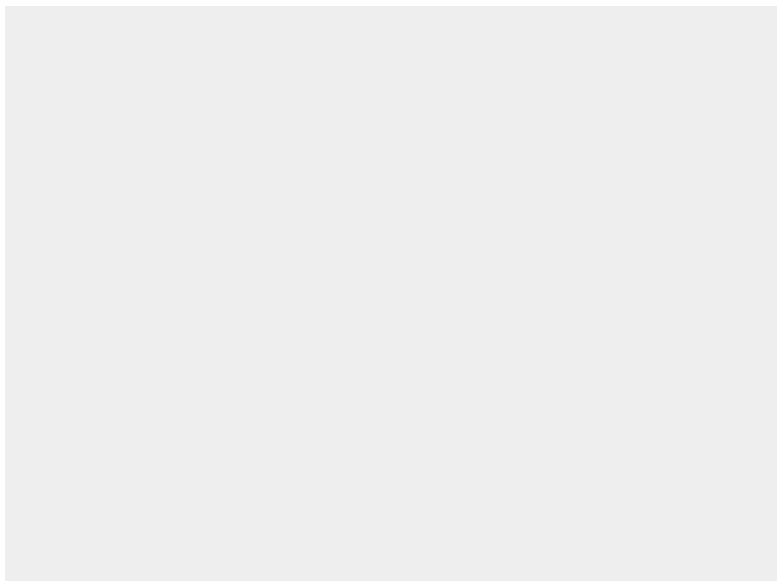
After the emergence of the condition of schizophrenia, dealing with this disorder as a role reinforced by the labelling involved in being diagnosed, the schizophrenic may be motivated by an impetus to make sense of his experience, which is non-normative experience. Obviously, all people seek to understand “the truth” about the world, even though these “truths” are subjective. Some people may view the world as nurturing, some may view it as hostile, some may view the world from the perspective of and “ivory tower” mentality, and some may succumb to cynicism regarding their experience in the world. Others may realize that the realities of the world require a closed-mouth respect, and others, and intellectuals in particular, wish to expose an objective truth that benefits the world, while religious individuals may accept a trust and a faith in reality, whether this stance may be helpful or harmful. Note that schizophrenics have a nebulous “reality” that is based on non-normative experience, and seeking to understand this experience may lead to greater depths of psychosis.

The nebulous experience of psychosis is frightening, and delving into this experience may result in paranoia. It is important to note that, while the world reflects mental illness as essentially nonsense, and it may be non-sense, the schizophrenic may seek to understand his illness as a way of re-emerging into the world with a role that makes sense to others. No one knows the travesty it is to become a caricature of a person, and schizophrenics are alone with their personal and perhaps unique experience.

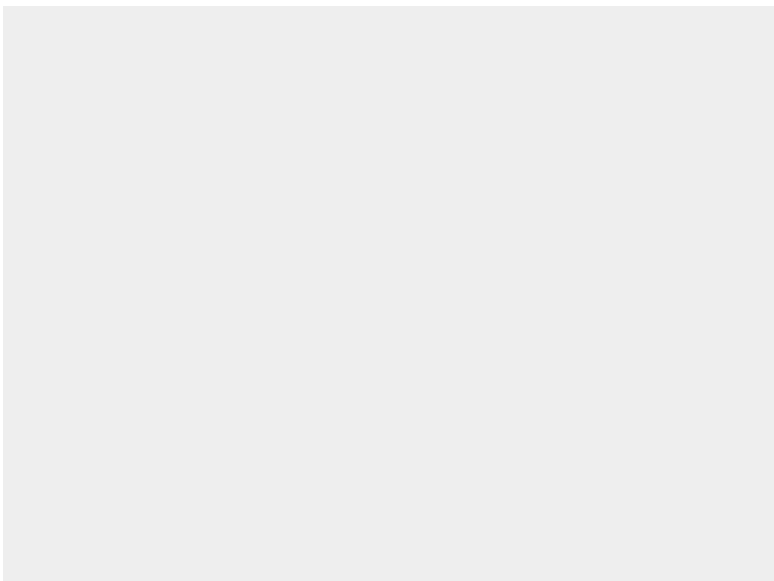
Perhaps the best way of combatting the negative realities in terms of the social roles inherent in condition of schizophrenia may be to recognize that we all have subjective experience and our understanding of mental illness should not be approached with an either/or mentality. Moreover, while this may represent as herculean task, we might try to lessen stigma regarding mental illness. Hopefully, this article might illuminate some ways of understanding mental illness in terms of the roles that we reject as inappropriate for the mentally ill, and hopefully this article might elucidate an understanding of mental illness that might provide reflection of the circumstances and identities of those who suffer from mental illness.



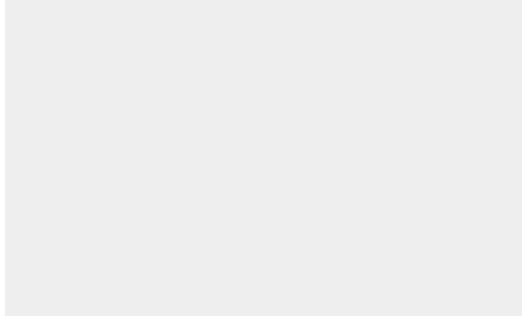
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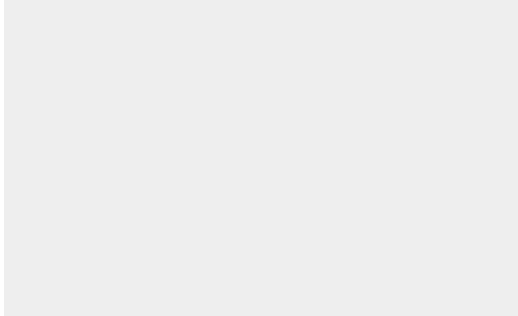
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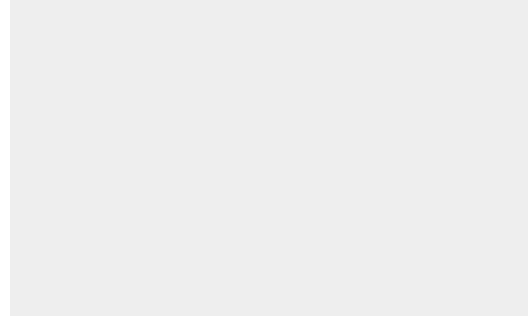
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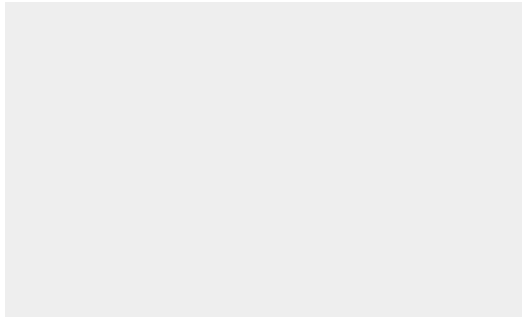
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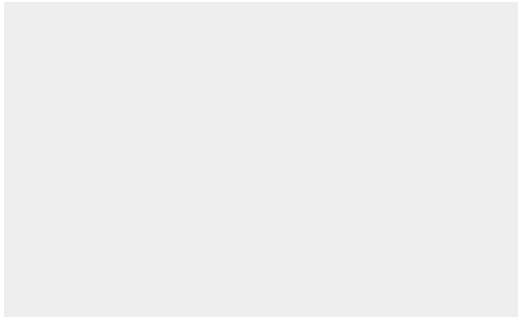
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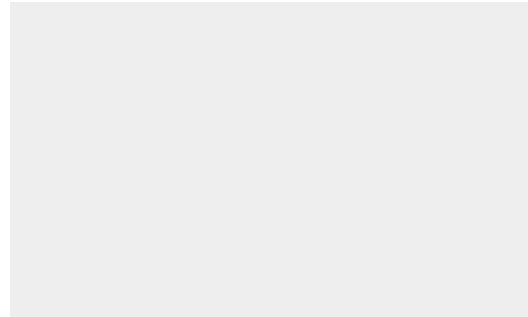
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