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**Hentschel, U., Smith, G., Draguns, J.G., Ehlers, W. (Eds.). (2004).  
Defense Mechanisms. Theoretical, Research and Clinical Perspectives.  
Amsterdam: Elsevier.**

Defense mechanisms capture an essential and inherently dynamic aspect of human living. Engaging in research on defense mechanism means to be faced with the exciting and major questions on psychic functioning e.g. how we can understand human behavior and the intra- and inter-individual differences of perceiving, evaluating and thinking the world, how personality develops, how the link between different processes like cognition, affect and motivations can be conceptualized, how the interactive and relational underpinnings of these processes work and how we can approach an understanding of the development, maintenance and change of pathological processes and patterns. As researchers and clinicians we are both faced with defining a theoretical framework where we start from to deal with these highly complex matters. Often the clinical knowledge on specific constructs and processes is difficult to be verbalized and categorized. Research efforts and results often seem to shorten these experiences, limit them to a narrower perspective. It is a critical question to find ways to bridge these gaps. The book edited by four major and long-term contributors to the field of clinical and experimental defense research can be regarded as a committed contribution to this important question.

Currently a lot of research efforts to answer some of the above mentioned questions are rather centered on emotions than defense e.g. on questions like how emotions are processed, regulated, adaptive/maladaptive, how capacities of emotion experience and emotion regulation can be changed through psychotherapy, how emotions can be understood in a neurobiological framework, how emotions and cognitions are tightly interrelated and what kind of developmental pathways lead to abilities/deficits in the emotional system. Thus on the first glance defense and defense mechanisms may seem to be old fashioned psychoanalytic constructs which carry a lot of dusty baggage on their shoulders and are often looked upon with skepticism from empirical research. The aim of the book is to highlight the importance of defense mechanisms in the various fields of clinical, applied, differential and neuro- psychology. It pursues the goal of shedding light on the diverging and manifold theoretical, empirical and clinical perspectives which have been pursued since the concept has been developed by Freud and further developed by many contributions from clinical and empirical research afterwards. The editors plead for a future perspective on defense which transcends the original psychoanalytic theoretical and clinical conceptualization. They stress the importance of putting the concept into a broader and integrative theory of information processing - without having to reject the "historically psychodynamic mainsprings of the concept".

The 2004 published volume has its origins in the 1993 published book "The Concept of Defense Mechanisms in Contemporary Psychology". The new edition is greatly updated and extended; many chapters have been thoroughly revised, some

completely new written and several chapters have been added. Thus the volume shows the further development of highly experienced researchers in the field as well as the development of novel ideas coming in from several new contributions. The book is a compilation of 27 chapters and an overall number of 40 different contributors, many of them well-known experts in the field of research on defense mechanisms in various psychological and psychiatric fields. The chapters are organized and embedded in six overall sections. Each section captures a central aspect of the complexity of defense processes in human life, clinical practice and empirical research. Starting with a section on general issues, several contributions on the theoretical perspectives of the concept are given. Definitions of defense and their historical changes are followed by first attempts to clarify differences/overlaps with terms and processes like coping and cognitive styles. Furthermore this first section provides an overview on current empirical approaches and measures of defense. The second section of the book introduces a more detailed description of major methods to measure defense empirically. Percept-genetic methods like the Defense Mechanism Test, Projective Measures like the Rorschach and Rating Techniques like the Defense Mechanism Rating Scales - to name only a few - are presented in detail and the pros and cons of each measurement are discussed by the different authors. The third section combines contributions on empirical research on defense mechanisms in differential and applied psychology. Major questions on how defense mechanisms can be understood within a cognitive framework of information processing and on the relation between defense, coping and reactions of the autonomic nervous system stand in the foreground of this section. Further inventive contributions on an attempt to experimentally support aspects of the psychoanalytic theory of the female Oedipus complex and of relating defense mechanisms to reactions on stress and monotony during complex tasks can be found in this section. The fourth section contains the largest number of contributions and is focused on defense mechanisms in psychotherapy and clinical research. The contributions range from research on the diagnostic use and predictive validity of defense mechanisms in the treatment of patients to more basic research on how we can understand defense in relation to processes of adaptation, intellectual performance and hope. The way defense mechanisms are interrelated with physical and mental health and ways of getting along with serious physical illness complement this section. The fifth section of the volume tightly connects to these issues and adds research on defense mechanisms in psychosomatic research, combining contributions on defense and hypertension, obesity, severe eating disorders and chronic disease. Finally in the last and sixth section the book closes with a contribution and outlook on defense mechanisms in neuropsychological contexts. There is an emphasis both on theoretical and methodical issues and questions throughout all of the sections and chapters.

As one reads through these chapters and sections it becomes clear that the topic of defense is dealt with in various ways using different theoretical and empirical approaches. Nonetheless all of the authors agree on the richness of the concept per se and most of the authors agree that defense processes can and have to be differentiated from coping processes. The unconscious nature of defense is stressed as the essential characteristic of defenses, as well as its major function to defend the ego against internal dangers and its conflict based emergence. Disagreement can be found on questions which methods are suited best to investigate defense processes. Still the presented research designs often choose

an either/or way of getting data on defense - either questionnaires or percept-genetic methods or different rating scales to assess defense clinically or on the basis of verbal material. These matters are critically discussed and outlooks on future requirements to extend the existing approaches are given in various chapters. One further major aspect of discussion focuses on the number of different defense mechanisms which can be differentiated. The lists of theoretically defined defense mechanisms, those which entered the one or the other empirical research method, and those which finally make it into an empirical study are heterogeneous and often make an interpretation of data in the light of other studies and theories difficult. Thus the volume reflects the existing diversity of theories and methods which are applied in the investigation of defense. The editors earn credit for bringing together researchers from different fields of psychology and medicine and thus succeed in their aim of trying to bridge gaps between psychoanalytic and cognitive psychological, experimental and clinical ways of thinking. The volume also shows that is still a far way to go and probably for the present remains a matter of wishful thinking to reach a common sense between the disciplines how to understand defense processes within an integrative theory based on the theoretical, clinical and empirical underpinnings of the concept. So far the theories, methods and results lack the possibility of direct comparison and the reader is left with a lot of different approaches and single empirical results without getting a synopsis on the many questions which are opened up. This fosters some kind of overstimulation and challenges for the reader to organize the different results, to understand what can be known so far and what kind of approach seems to be the most sensible to capture the processes under investigation. In its rich source for reflecting the current state of the art in research on defense mechanisms, the book is inherently thought stimulating and what more can authors of a book wish for than to stimulate creative thinking in readers who will probably develop new ideas and ways of thinking to bring research on defense one step further and to keep the discussion lively. The book with its various perspectives proves that defense is anything else than dusty and old-fashioned but stands at the core of an enriched understanding of human psychic functioning.

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