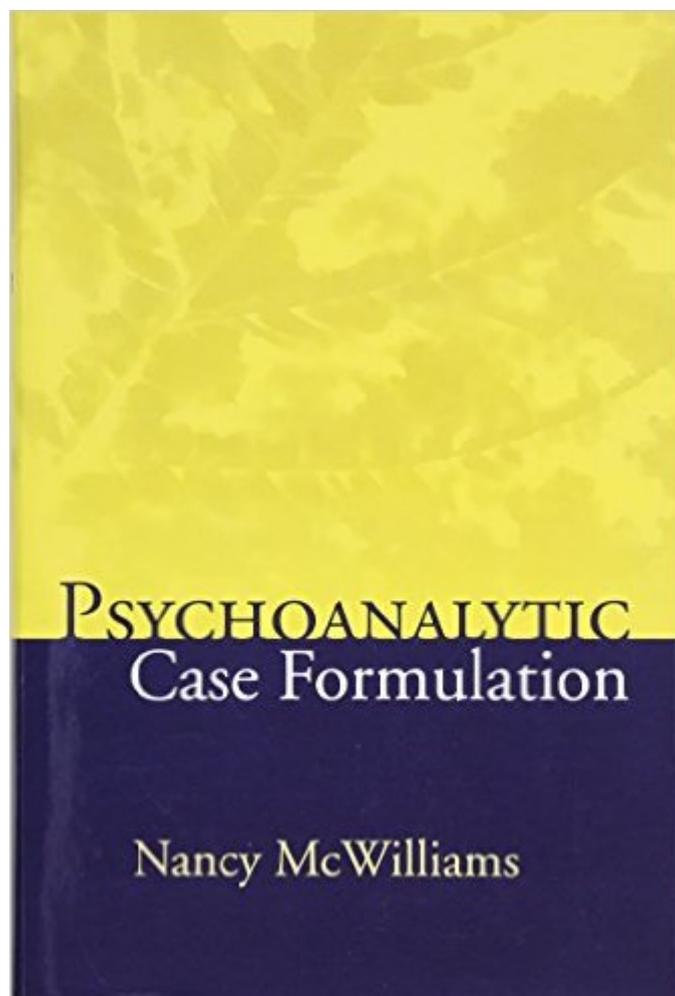


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# Psychoanalytic Case Formulation



## Synopsis

What kinds of questions do experienced therapists ask themselves when facing a new client? How can clinical expertise be taught? From the author of the landmark *Psychoanalytic Diagnosis*, this book takes clinicians step-by-step through developing an understanding of each client's unique psychology and using this information to guide and inform treatment decisions. McWilliams shows that while seasoned practitioners rely upon established diagnostic categories for record-keeping and insurance purposes, their actual clinical concepts and practices reflect more inferential, subjective, and intuitive processes. Interweaving illustrative case examples with theoretical insights and clinically significant research, chapters cover assessment of client temperament, developmental issues, defenses, affects, identifications, relational patterns, self-esteem needs, and pathogenic beliefs. Winner--Gradiva Award, National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Nancy Mc Williams is imminently readable. She has the gift of de-mystifying difficult concepts; or, put another way, she does not apparently have ego-needs that compel her to make the concepts of psychotherapy, or the field itself, obtuse. She also has quite an ability to cut-to-the-chase. Consider, for example, her description of "insight": "Part of the emphasis on understanding is that the two of them [patient and therapist] need something to talk about while the nonspecific relational factors are doing their quiet healing." Her personality shows through in her writing, so you will learn at two levels -- what she is telling you explicitly, which is invaluable, and what she is telling you implicitly --

what it is about her that makes her so effective -- and believe me, you would want her to be your therapist, supervisor, whatever. As an aside, she seems to have a particular interest in, and gift for working with, addicts and sociopaths. Read the book, make charts, keep it at hand. It's a good read.

While I agree with another reviewer that "The book could be much more valuable ... had there been a greater focus on relating findings more clearly and thoroughly to the actual work of therapy," it wouldn't then be about "case formulation," would it? There is more wisdom in this book than in any other five books on psychology I've read recently, and I read a lot. It's full of seemingly obvious insights I've never heard anyone say before. Simplicity and clarity are misleadingly difficult to pull off and are the sign of someone with real understanding. You may not be able to have Nancy McWilliams supervise your work but you can buy this book. She's not infallible; I don't agree with everything she says, but I also don't think you can go wrong by spending a few evenings with her.

Few books on \*psychoanalytic\* therapy offer such an excellent combination of theory and \*application\*. Want to know what to do in therapy once you recognize your patient's defenses, patterns, level of self-esteem, issues with affect, etc? Get this book. You do not know basic psychoanalytic tenets? The theory is there as well. Some people think this book is only for beginners. I disagree. It seems simple because McWilliams is a gifted writer and teacher, and has a knack to explain the most difficult concepts with everyday language that a 6 year old would understand. If you want an easy read with a lot of substance, read McWilliams. If you want a painful read with little substance, read Lacan (haha.) I am a beginner therapist, and this book has helped me immensely. The professor that recommended it has been practising for 35 years and \*still\* finds it useful. (Note: he is a renowned clinician and scholar... not just anybody) Every sentence counts. There is no superfluous material here. You get your every penny's worth of information. The book is also a page-turner--since when is a textbook supposed to be this enjoyable??? And McWilliams, who is obviously comfortable in her own skin, does not show the dogmatism that is typical in other writers. She is open to admit the usefulness of other approaches to therapy, and this very openness makes this text a useful resource for anyone interested in psychotherapy, even if they are coming from a different approach (cognitive behavioral, humanistic...).

Tonight as we handed in our "take home final exams" for a Psychoanalytic Theory and Therapy class we all agreed that this book (a required text) was a good read. The author shared her experiences as a therapist in such a practical way, and gave us a taste of how to approach

psychotherapy from a psychoanalytic perspective. Due to limited time this semester, I skimmed through a couple of the chapters (don't tell the prof) and actually look forward, during Christmas break, to more carefully reading each chapter.

As a student of counseling techniques, the perspective on psychoanalytic practice from non-analytic authors has been absolutely dreadful. Textbooks on psychotherapy seem to agree that psychoanalytic therapy is only making someone lie on a sofa and then not talking to them, while pocketing fees -- but the reality is that psychoanalytic psychotherapy is a rich and diverse body of practices with literally thousands of published scientific studies to back up the interventions and case formulations. McWilliams is at the forefront of the integrative psychoanalytic profession, bridging various schools of psychodynamic and psychoanalytic research and practice, and she writes beautifully. This is a great text to orient the beginning therapist in building a nuanced multi-faceted evaluation of the factors influencing the clients or patients one sees. Without a broad and large perspective, you can't deliver effective therapy of any sort -- and McWilliams goes a great job of reminding us to look at the clients from all angles, social or psychological or medical, as well as the dimension of personality and personality functioning.

The author has a special talent to write guidelines and manuals. I do not know analogous books written in English or in French, either German. Here we have an excellent manual for psychoanalytic candidates, who naturally have difficulties to verbalize, to explicit, and to structure their first clinical cases presentations. The book is extremely valuable not only for the psychoanalytical candidates, but also for teaching psychoanalyst, even for those from other, than the author, psychoanalytical schools: it's always easier to interweave your specific threads, when somebody so talented already weaved such a rich and clear canvas.

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