
Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Glick, A. D., Clarkin, J. F., & Kessler, D. R. (1987) *Marital and Family Therapy*. Orlando, Florida: Grune & Stratton Inc.

Reviewed by: Jeffrey Fuhr, Ph.D., University of Victoria

It is little wonder why there are so few family therapy texts in print — it would hardly seem worth the effort to try and improve on this text. While the authors make it clear that the book is intended as a “basic textbook” for family therapists in training, the clarity with which the comprehensive and broad array of concepts are presented, make this book also compulsory refresher reading. The impressive reference list at the end of each section directs the more advanced student of family therapy to the full range of theoretical, clinical and research literature. As if in keeping with their objective of acquainting the student with the basic principles and techniques of family therapy, they have provided limited case transcripts, preferring students to use the text in conjunction with actual case supervision.

The book is divided into ten sections, and includes topical discussions on many controversial areas facing the field of family therapy. For example, in section two, “The Functional and Dysfunctional Family,” rather than identifying non-traditional family forms on the dysfunctional end of the continuum, the authors point out that it is the flexible and functional range of communication and problem solving skills that characterize functional families. And again, in section five, after uncovering the many myths about homosexual relationship patterns, they take the position that “gay couples who unthinkably accept traditional heterosexual models as molds for their own relationships may fall into an unnecessary restrictive set of options” (p. 307-308).

In section three, “Family Evaluation,” the student is provided with an array of questions to guide the assessment of family problem areas. A limited but adequate introduction to genograms and family self-reports is also provided. The authors make the point in a later chapter that family therapy should never be recommended without a proper evaluation.

By first distinguishing among the major models of family therapy in section four, and then identifying broad-based interventions and stages of treatment, this section makes excellent refresher study. A variety of techniques for dealing with resistance to therapy is offered, as well as further guidelines for administering family therapy in combination with other treatments modalities. The section ends with a discussion on Brief Therapy, encouraging the practitioner to more focused, time-limited treatment.

In section six, the authors discuss the controversial issue of introducing family treatment where special problems exist, or where a family member has been hospitalized. They seem to suggest from this discussion that while families may not always be directly involved in development of such problems, they certainly are part of the solution. To this end, the family can be educated about the course

of an illness, and encouraged to learn coping skills and stress management techniques.

A particularly innovative approach to assist the practitioner in recommending family treatment is offered in section seven. The Family Therapy Decision Tree is described as a sequential four-step evaluation process. Indications and contradictions for family therapy as well as criteria for recommending individual versus family treatment, marital treatment versus sex therapy are provided. Students are also sensitized to such cultural, ethnic, religious and economic issues that must be carefully considered in pursuing a particular course of treatment.

In chapter nine, a review of the research literature alerts the student to the importance of considering the data supporting the use of particular forms of family therapy before actually using them. This discussion also reminds the student of the basic criteria to be satisfied in designing a study on the effectiveness of family therapy.

Finally, practical and ethical considerations in the application of family therapy are addressed in section ten.

The authors point out often in their text, an appreciation of family life-cycle variables should guide the practitioner to areas of intervention. In much the same way, an appreciation of the kind of information needed to shift the family therapist to the next stage of professional development should include a reread of this text.

O'Hanlon, W., & Wilk, J. (1987). *Shifting contexts: the generation of effective psychotherapy*. New York and London: Guilford, 1987. 298 pp.

Reviewed by: Alvin R. Mahrer, University of Ottawa

I especially recommend this book to two groups of readers. One is the group of psychotherapists drawn toward the thinking spearheaded by Gregory Bateson and Milton Erickson. Although this body of literature already has spawned a number of psychotherapies, O'Hanlon and Wilk have done a commendable job of framing an organized, workable psychotherapeutic approach that is faithful to the Bateson-Erickson foundation, melds the authors' own clinical acumen, and sparkles with the refreshing, no-nonsense maximizing of what can be accomplished in each and every session. It is for individual adult therapists, couples and family therapists, and therapists in the tradition of neurolinguistic programming, cybernetics, strategic and systemic therapies.

I also recommend this book for psychotherapists whose sense of humour allows them to appreciate a book that is unsparing in its refusal to accept virtually anything that is held dear by most psychotherapies. Whether you do or do not accept the way O'Hanlon and Wilk invite you to do therapy, you will be challenged by their unconditional puncturing of just about every cherished truth, accepted axiom, precious presumption, saluted Shibboleth, foundational cornerstone, and pillar of practice that most psychotherapists believe in. You will be secretly cheering on their roguish deflatings—until you find your own approach