



Family Assessment: Integrating Multiple Clinical Perspectives

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This book on family assessment integrates psychodynamic and systemic perspectives in a unique way. U.S. and European authors draw from both perspectives and integrate their cultural backgrounds. In this book the family is evaluated on three levels: the individuals, the dyads and triads, and the family system. Interwoven with clinical examples the first part discusses the importance of the initial interview from the first contact with a family to goal setting and treatment planning. The second part presents the various clinical perspectives that underlie the three level model. These perspectives include the family's contextual factors such as its stage in the family life cycle, its social world, and related areas such as parenting styles and behavior. Finally, the third part presents some clinical applications focusing on the use of family sculpting procedures as assessment tools. This family assessment book is a true integration of theoretical perspectives and international expertise, edited and written by leading family assessment researchers in the United States and Europe.

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Editorial Review

Review

Family Assessment: Integrating Multiple Clinical Perspectives is not your run of the mill assessment text. It is a breath of fresh air. From their reminder that assessment cannot be objective, only co-constructed between family and therapist to their point that assessment must not be an end unto itself but point beyond itself to indicate a therapeutic direction, Cierpka, Thomas, and Sprenkle bring their substantial experience as clinicians, teachers, supervisors, and researchers to bear on a refreshing explication of family assessment. Cierpka, Thomas, and Sprenkle's approach to family assessment is grounded in systemic theoretical notions of whole/part relations. They note that individuals, dyads and triads, and families, the elements of human interaction, form hierarchical levels of logical abstraction. At one level of abstraction, each element is an integrated whole, while at a lower level of abstraction, each constitutes but a part of a larger whole. Consistent with systems theory, the authors remind us that the wholes formed by these whole/part relationships are greater than the sum of their parts. They suggest that the process of family assessment is best guided by the systemic principle that wholes have properties that cannot be found in the parts, which means that assessing a family can only be done by looking at the myriad relationships between the many parts, the many contexts that formulate family and individual problems. They warn that therapists are ill-advised to concentrate on one level only and consider various levels simultaneously. The authors have organized the book around the idea that to achieve a thorough and contextually relevant assessment, practitioners must use what they call a "three-level model of family assessment." Assessment must take place at the level of the individual, dyads and triads, and families. Cierpka, Thomas, and Sprenkle believe that the three-level model makes it possible to integrate otherwise disparate family therapy theories. Specifically, they emphasize and integrate two theoretical perspectives--psychodynamic and systems theory. Family Assessment integrates multiple theoretical perspectives of assessment, which are offered by 6 German, 1 Canadian, and 12 American authors, into a single comprehensive approach that has the overarching goal of achieving fit between assessment and clinical treatment. Based on the idea that the point of assessment is improved therapeutic treatment, Cierpka, Thomas, and Sprenkle make clear their assumption that assessment must include strengths and resources as well as deficits and dysfunction, and they place emphasis on using assessment to identify the resources that families bring to the resolution of problems. Family Assessment is divided into three sections--an Introduction and Parts I and II. Two chapters comprise the Introduction. These delineate the theoretical framework that guides the authors' understanding of family assessment, define family and family assessment, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of assessment, and, most importantly, lay out how Cierpka, Thomas, and Sprenkle are thinking about assessment. The second chapter, in particular, strives to integrate the various family therapy theories, such as psychodynamic theory and systems theory. Part I, three chapters in length, is a step-by-step, practice-oriented exploration of the assessment aspects of the initial interview, beginning with the first telephone contact and moving to problem definition and formulating therapeutic goals. The last chapter of Part I is a case illustration that pulls together the assessment guidelines presented in the previous two chapters. Part II, comprising eight chapters, offers a number of clinical assessment perspectives. Each of these perspectives describes a hierarchy of contexts that inform and shape families and, thus, family assessment. These include the multiple contexts in which the problem is established, such as the referral source; families' cultural and social world; families' multigenerational histories; individual and family life cycles; and, parenting. Two of the last three chapters in Part II include descriptions of assessment from systemic and psychoanalytic points of view. The book's final chapter applies these two perspectives to practice by describing the assumptions, history, and use of family sculpture as a form of both assessment and treatment. Family Assessment is a comprehensive and articulate examination of the core issues that shape the theory and practice of family assessment. The book has a

student-friendly organizational structure that encourages readers to apply learning to practice. It is sure to become a favorite of practitioners, teachers, and students. Practitioners will find this book to be a helpful refresher as well as a new resource. Students will value the clear examples, short vignettes, and full-length case studies peppered throughout the text. Teachers will appreciate the clear integration of theory and practice. All readers will appreciate the distinctive international flavor of the text and the added richness that arises from the mix of chapters written by authors shaped by different cultures and historical contexts and thinking in different languages. Written in a clear and accessible style, this engaging text will be invaluable to anyone embarking on or already involved in family assessment. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 25(1), 84-86, 2006 Martha Laughlin, Ph.D. Family Therapy Program Valdosta State University

About the Author

Volker Thomas, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy in the Department of Child Development and Family Studies at Purdue University. He received his Ph.D. in Family Social Science with a Specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy from the University of Minnesota and an MSW from the University of Kassel, Germany. Since 1993 Dr. Thomas is on the faculty of the COAMFTE accredited doctoral MFT program at Purdue University and served as its director from 1999-2003. Dr. Thomas has been on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *The Family Journal*, and *Counseling and Values*. He served as the Editor-in-Chief of the *AFTA Newsletter* from 1998-2002. His research interests include family assessment, family therapy with economically disadvantaged families, gender and multicultural perspectives in family therapy, family therapy with children, ethical and professional issues, supervision in family therapy training. Among his many publications are recent books: Cierpka, M., Thomas, V., & Sprenkle, D. H. (Eds.) (2005). *Family assessment: Integrating Multiple Perspectives*. Kirkland, WA: Hogrefe. Thomas, V., Karis, T., & Wetchler, J. (Eds.) (2003). *Clinical Issues With Interracial Couples: Theory and Research*. New York: Haworth Press. Additionally, Dr. Thomas has published over 60 refereed journal articles and book chapters, and has extensive experience as presenter at national and international conferences. Dr. Thomas is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in Indiana and has a small private practice in West Lafayette. He is a Clinical Member and Approved Supervisor of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT).

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The reason why? Because this Family Assessment: Integrating Multiple Clinical Perspectives is an unordinary book that the inside of the guide waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will jolt you with the secret this inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who write the book in such amazing way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of gains than the other book get such as help improving your talent and your critical thinking means. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

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