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Overall, the book is a well-written and clearly conceptualized presentation of the process of social-work treatment in general. It is highly recommended for educators teaching first-year methods classes focused on individuals, families, and groups and for beginning practitioners in the field. However, the book is less useful in providing guidance for the practice of short-term treatment in particular.

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**The Art of Psychotherapy: Case Studies from the Family Therapy Networker**

Richard Simon, Laura Markowitz, Cindy Barrilleaux, & Brett Topping, Editors.

New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1999

**Reviewed by Diane Weis Farone**

IN AN ERA emphasizing efficiency and the development of process and outcome protocols that reduce human problems to formulaic solutions, this book gives the kind of lift that used to be available from "staffing" cases. Remember the exhilaration of hearing your colleagues describe their reactions, philosophies, and perspectives before staff meetings were transformed into "continuous quality improvement"?

In *The Art of Psychotherapy*, practitioners present 26 case studies, with each commented upon by at least one, and sometimes two or three, other clinicians or theoreticians. Those of you who read *The Family Therapy Networker* will be familiar with the format. The editors have no particular "agenda" to promote, other than the belief that the case study, more than any other form of writing, provides an appreciation for the "interpersonal chemistry of therapy" and the therapists' moments of "deliberate decision making, unexpected emotional responses and—for the fortunate clinician—flashes of illumination." The cases are organized into sections highlighting couples issues, working with children, psychotherapy and modern life, tools of the trade, and "the impossible case." In other words, the book covers the range of "nuts and

bolts" situations that make up the daily life of the therapist.

One could find cases representing almost any problem of interest in family work, and the case discussions are not meant to provide "the answers." The situations contain dilemmas that have no pat resolutions. The editors have selected commentators who can illuminate the different theoretical perspectives and clarify the issues involved. For example, in "The Overresponsibility Trap," work with a family with an alcoholic husband/father serves to illustrate both strengths and problematic aspects of the concept of "enabling," the directive qualities of strategic family therapy, and the possible "passivity" involved in a narrative approach.

In the case, the wife/mother was relieved of her depression by detaching from her feelings of guilt and responsibility for her husband's drinking problem. When she detached and started paying more attention to her own needs, the teenage daughter assumed the role of worrying about and taking care of the father. The therapists' approach was to take each family member's preferred view of himself/herself and to reframe it as a strength, in a way that would encourage each to accept more personal accountability. The strategy worked insofar as bringing the father back into a more responsible role in the family, although in itself it did not bring about a termination of his drinking. A year after the termination of therapy, the mother and daughter separated from the husband/father. He then chose to pursue sobriety. Eventually the family was reunited.

Two commentaries follow the case. One suggests that the results, although ultimately therapeutic, could have been achieved more quickly had the therapists recognized and used their role as influencers. The commentator questions whether the attempt to focus exclusively on strengths might be seen as so saccharin as to cause the mother and daughter to question whether the therapist could be trusted as genuine. The other reviewer notes the narrative concepts used in the therapy, and points out that the therapists neglected to explore the gender expectations and cultural sources of the mother's and daughter's assuming too much responsibility for the relationship. Such an analysis would assist the mother and daughter to separate themselves from the expectations and make a more conscious choice. At the end of the commentaries, the original presenters have an opportunity to synthesize the reviewers' comments.

Each case in the book ends with "Questions for Study." Some of the questions are relatively simple and straightforward. Many are quite thought provoking and could provide a good springboard for staff development within an agency or professional organization.

The variety of cases includes both traditional and current issues of interest. As in the chapter discussed above, some cases involve seeming clashes of theoretical orientations, or a conflict between one's theoretical orientation and the client's definition of the problems. Some presentations involve the impact of racial, gender, homophobic, and cross-cultural aspects of the therapeutic endeavor. Still others address current issues, such as the debate about "recovered memories" of childhood abuse, the possible overuse of the attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder diagnosis and medication as a treatment methodology, and under what conditions to include a physically abusive partner in couples work. Still others describe innovative tech-

niques or "tools," such as eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, brief solution-oriented therapy, and thought field therapy.

*The Art of Psychotherapy* would be particularly interesting to seasoned therapists who have experienced the ambiguities reflected in this work. It also provides a good update on contemporary theories and issues for those of us who received our formal "education" prior to the 1990s. The book could be used as a reference for ideas about handling specific kinds of concerns for therapists at any level of experience. Possibly its best use would be as a stimulus for the non-novice, through the questions it poses to the integration, synthesis, and understanding of one's own eclectic style of practice.

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