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## Current Resources

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## **Review of Current Resources**

**Children Who Could Have Been: The Legacy of Child Welfare in Wealthy America. William M. Epstein. (1999).  
Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.**

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William Epstein sets the tone for this book, which purports to be an evaluation of the public child welfare system in the United States, by examining the cases of two teenagers, Natalie and Adam, who both wound up in Boys Town in southern Nevada. Natalie, we are told, was repeatedly molested, raped, and beaten by her father. A few weeks before her twelfth birthday, she was removed to a temporary children's shelter, but was returned home after two weeks. Her father continued to sexually abuse her. At thirteen, she was again placed in a temporary shelter, and then a foster family home; then a large group home for 25 teenaged girls, run by a church organization; then a smaller group home run by a for-profit agency; and finally, at age 15, in Boys Town. Adam was placed in a temporary shelter at the age of two, when his mother, a prostitute and drug addict, was terminated from AFDC and evicted from her apartment. He was returned to her a few months later, but placed in a temporary shelter again when his mother was jailed for selling drugs. Returned once again, some time later he was placed yet again in a temporary shelter after his mother admitted that she had no money and no place to live. Adam was then placed in a foster family home. Some time after, parental rights were legally terminated and Adam was adopted by his foster parents, who often beat him. He was eventually placed in Boys Town, at age twelve. Epstein characterizes the two group homes that Natalie lived in as understaffed and neglectful, and Adam's foster-adoptive family as emotionally as well as physically abusive, but he has praise for Boys Town.

These two cases are not merely one-paragraph vignettes; they comprise one fifth of the entire book. Yet, we are not told how this sample for this study was selected. Presumably, the author met both children at Boys Town. The case histories, it turns out, although "largely based on the experiences of two children," are composites, "leaving out some actual experiences and adding others" (p. xviii). Epstein admits that a "problem of representativeness naturally remains," but puzzlingly excuses himself by claiming that the "literature is too weak to

provide any authoritative description of the typical child" (p. xviii). Even if we were willing to assume that the two children comprised a random sample of the entire population of Boys Town in southern Nevada, it obviously would be an extremely narrow lens through which to view the public child welfare system. Most children in the system, or even in foster care, do not wind up in residential treatment settings. Nevertheless, Epstein concludes from this highly selective sample that "most children in public care have been abandoned—physically and emotionally—by their parents" (p. 28). (Strangely, on the back of the dust jacket, Duncan Lindsey claims that the author "examines the [public child welfare] system through the eyes of those it serves.")

Having thus established his research credentials, Epstein is prepared to harshly judge the work and methodological flaws of others. He will, however, apply quite different—although often equally odd—standards to their work, while continuing to violate the most basic rules of rational, much less scientific, discourse. He criticizes Maas and Engler's classic study of many hundreds of children in foster care as "quite limited," and like "a series of case studies," drawing cases "from only nine communities" (p. 44). Compare Epstein's fictional sample of two. Tataara's estimate that the median length of continuous stays of children in foster care declined in the late 1970s and early 1980s is criticized on the grounds that it was "based on only 60% of the children in foster care" (p. 53). That there is no reason to believe that the estimate would be any different if based on 100% of the children does not concern Epstein. This is far more a petty game of "gotcha" for its own sake than it is responsible or pertinent scientific criticism. In regard to other descriptive studies, he spews out charges concerning sample representativeness, "unreliable data collection," and "weak" studies (p. 61) without any specificity or substantiation of his claims. And against all reason and evidence, most of which is based on studies he has apparently not read or at least avoids mentioning here, he doubts the strong relationship between poverty and child abuse and neglect (p. 61).

Epstein also doubts that children have been removed from their homes because the mother frequented taverns or was a lesbian, or for reasons of homelessness and poverty. Yet he presents no evidence to refute these facts, and shows no more than passing knowledge of child welfare, grounded almost exclusively in his reading of aggregate data studies. Even then, he ignores studies that have revealed homelessness, inadequate housing, and lack of financial resources as reasons accounting for the placement of sizable percentages of the children in foster care. Moreover, he ignores, and thus makes no attempt to explain away, research findings suggesting that even small amounts of additional income and material supports are related to less harm to children and less child removal (p. 39).

Epstein sets up for his vituperative criticism a simplistic structuralism held by no one and presumes to lecture us on the difference between correlation and causation (p. 38). Moreover,



one need only skim the child welfare literature to know that the behavioral problems of the parents and children are abundantly recognized, and any extensive reading of case records would reveal that there is little reluctance on the part of caseworkers to identify parental inabilities or personality deficits, or on the part of supervisors to act on workers' judgments. Epstein's comment that children merely "appear" to be removed for reasons of poverty because of others' (presumably supervisors and researchers) preference to ignore the workers' judgments is naive (p. 60).

Epstein's criticisms of experimental evaluations of child welfare interventions are often insubstantial. For example, in regard to the Second Chance for Families project evaluation by Mary Ann Jones and associates in New York State in the 1970s, he points out that workers, knowing of the experimental conditions, sometimes vowed to provide extraordinary service to a control case. He also claims that we do not know that the experimental group actually received different services than the control group. Then how can we explain the fact that, six months after the intake phase of the study, a far greater percentage of the control group children than experimental group children had entered foster care? That we do not know what, specifically, about a complex experimental intervention has produced the results, does not obviate the success of the intervention. The findings cannot simply be dismissed, as Epstein tries to do, without providing some convincing reason or evidence to believe that the intervention itself did not produce the results. The fact that certitude will never be achieved does not negate the value of experimentation, and does not dismiss detractors from their obligation to provide convincing reasons for their own claims of ineffectiveness.

In regard to the sum of experimental testing of so-called Intensive Family Preservation Services (IFPS) programs in recent years, the findings regarding prevention of the need for out-of-home placement are mixed at best, permitting the conclusion that we do not yet know if such programs are effective (or not), without even beginning to examine the methodological flaws of the studies. Yet such flaws have been amply analyzed by others. Epstein, however, criticizes one IFPS program evaluation for using an overflow comparison group and having children in both experimental and comparison groups who may not have been at imminent risk of placement (p. 106), without providing any supportable reason for believing that the findings would have otherwise been different. He inexplicably criticizes another evaluation for excluding nonrandomly selected cases from analyses and for not having produced findings that would permit rejection of the null hypothesis (p. 109). His strategy is to pile up such criticisms, in a bewildering display of "the substitution of volume for substance" (p. 116), to borrow a phrase from Epstein himself. His object is to claim that there has been little credible research in child welfare and no credible demonstrations of the effectiveness of any programs (pp. 33, 40, 127).

By contrast, Epstein offers no evidence for his own conjectures, which amount to crude stereotyping (generalizations, perhaps, from his case study of two). For example, he claims that foster parents, generally, are motivated only by "mundane financial considerations" (p. 58); that the children in foster care, in general, are not loved by their parents or their caretakers (p. 125); that only a minority of foster families provide nurturing care (p. 125); and that the children in care are "essentially feral" (p. 125). Not a scintilla of evidence is offered in support of any of the foregoing pronouncements. In regard to conjectures that he does try to support by referring to research, he is highly selective in the research he cites (in reference, for example, to his proposition that foster children are "frequently" abused and neglected in foster care [pp. 73, 125]). And he is not above citing studies with exceedingly small sample sizes and statistically insignificant findings (in support, for example, of his claim that "reunified" children have worse physical care and lower school achievement than those remaining in foster care [p. 101]).

Epstein displays a basic misunderstanding of the scientific method, its use in the applied social sciences, and its role in rational discourse and the policy arena. In the absence of being able to establish causation with certitude, we are obliged to depend upon the weight of the evidence. In an ongoing manner, theories are setting the child welfare agenda, and policies and programs are operative. Thus, the choice is never to do nothing or something, and the task is to determine whether the weight of the evidence favors the current operative theories and programs relative to others. We are obliged to develop plausible hypotheses, consistent with the evidence, and test them as best we can, feeding the incomplete evidence that emerges back into the process of rational discourse. Despite the facade of erudition in his writing, Epstein displays a baffling ignorance of epistemology, and engages in a sophistry divorced from the need to act in the real world. According to his logic, we should say nothing about anything, and do nothing, until flawless experiments have been performed and certainty has been reached. For this, we will be waiting forever. Epstein, of course, would exempt himself from this rule and would continue to make generalizations based on no evidence at all.

The book is littered with nasty and mean-spirited judgments of the leading researchers in the field, again with no credible evidence. Mary Ann Jones and her associates are characterized as a "group of canny researchers" whose evaluation project was "an adventure in neglect" (p. 85). John Schuerman and his colleagues are accused of allowing "careerist motives" to influence their "self-serving" conclusions (p. 99). Researchers in the field, in general, are accused of "professional decadence," and of operating in "the hope of political favor" (p. 101). Peter Pecora and his associates are claimed to "manipulate professionally expedient findings" (p. 106). This is yellow journalism, not scholarship nor even rational discussion.



What is Epstein's point in all this, other than a demonstration of what he erroneously believes to be his own scientific dexterity, and other than his claims that the researchers in the field are unethical, deviant, and dishonest; the foster parents are motivated only by money and are unconcerned about the children they take in; the children themselves are wild animals; and their parents are depraved, defective, and incompetent (p. 36)?

Epstein condemns the American public for lacking generosity and being "miserly" (p. 30). Inexplicably, after declaring all experiments, analyses, and demonstrations over the past 40 years "not believable," he claims that this very circumstance suggests that "generous interventions may be needed" (p. 122). He states that the "consistent inability of the human services—notably child welfare services—to demonstrate the effectiveness of any of its weak interventions suggests that more intensive interventions are necessary" (p. 131). He is seemingly suggesting that if a little of something is not working, then this automatically implies that more of the same will be effective. He is silent on how or why we should convince the public to throw good money after bad.

But amidst this illogic, there is a confusion between aggregate funding and funding of the individual case. The provision of housing, income support, or day care for an individual family is not a small or inexpensive intervention. Moreover, many children are currently in institutional placements at costs of upward of \$50,000 per year. In the individual case, this is not an "ungenerous" amount. Yet in that individual case, we can question whether or not better outcomes could be achieved if that same amount were to be used for some type of intervention within the family.

Thus, we must ask what more "generous" interventions should consist of. What, exactly, should be implemented with more money, and what interventions, specifically, does Epstein propose? What are his "possibly effective solutions" (p. 126)? Epstein opines that even such aggregate programs as public housing and urban renewal have done more harm than good (p. 131). And he has already denounced such provisions as income assistance, day care, and housing (when indeed given) as "trivial," as failed remedies, and a result of liberalism (pp. 37, 38, 49, 62, 131). And certainly, he has no use whatsoever for counseling and therapy (pp. 62, 120).

What Epstein does propose is "more intensive surrogate care for many more children" (p. xix). He lauds Boys Town and claims that "the child welfare system needs to improve on Boys Town," by providing access to a greater range of experiences, and offering "more opportunities for self-expression" (pp. 126-127). But nowhere in the book does he refer to any evaluative studies of the effectiveness of Boys Town or for that matter, any other institutional

settings. He offers no evidence whatsoever. Finally, he mentions the need to "reform the system" (p. 128), but gives no indication of what it should be reformed to, or how.

Although Epstein suggests that perhaps "far too few children are removed" (p. 69), and expresses doubt that there have been inappropriate removals, he fails to define what he means by "inappropriate" (p. 61). For him, foster care placement decision-making criteria are a nonissue. And although he suggests that many more children than are known to the child welfare system lack adequate care (p. 32), nowhere does he state what he means by "adequate." He ominously states that "a cost-conscious society obviously learns to tolerate the vagaries of diverse child-rearing practices" and that a more "humane" society "might sacrifice some amount of personal liberty" for the sake of children (p. 34), but he is unclear about exactly whose personal liberty he has in mind.

Although he tries to distance himself from conservatism as well as liberalism, he is closer to the former despite his rhetoric of generosity. Conservatives are willing to spend as much money or more than liberals, but they are more inclined to spend it on prisons, the futile drug wars, foster care, and institutions or "orphan" asylums. Despite Epstein's more-radical-than-thou posturing throughout this book, his views have more in common with Herrnstein and Murray (in *The Bell Curve*), Newt Gingrich, and Chicago's Patrick Murphy than he might think. His recommendations for the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century amount to child rescue with a vengeance and are a throwback to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the same predictable results.

Child welfare scholars, understanding that no one has cornered the market on truth, at least try to maintain civility in their discourse. Yet Epstein, deluding himself that he has no ideological bias, has the certitude that everyone else is wrong. The only one left unscathed in this book, of course, is Epstein himself. Judging from on high, he offers his pronouncements as a gift to us dimwits and mercenaries here on the ground. His level of arrogance is not warranted by the quality of his analysis.



**Skills for Families Skills for Life. Linda M. Shadoin, Joni Cook-Griffin, and Jane L. Peterson. (1999). Nebraska: The Boys Town Press.**

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*Skills for Families Skills for Life* is an easy to read guide written for family practitioners that lists over one hundred family life skills and their behavioral components in eleven different skill areas. The skill areas include a wide range of household and life management skills: communication, education, housing, medical needs, money management, child supervision, social support, nutrition, sexual abuse, stress and home safety. The authors provide a brief introduction to skills teaching and do a thorough job breaking down each skill into component steps. The lists of the components of each skill are very comprehensive, although some of the components seem oriented toward fairly well functioning or higher educated parents/caregivers. The skill components/steps are presented very clearly with some behavioral indicators and examples provided. For example, the first step under the skill of "Recognizing Medical Needs" ("Observe and note when the child displays unusual physical symptoms...."), provides clear, specific examples of possible symptoms – "fever, sweating, pulling at ears, coughing." Other skills such as "Hiring a Baby Sitter," "Transporting Children in a Car," and "Asking Children about Personal Safety" could benefit from more specific examples of what to do and say.

Although many of the skills presented in the guide appear fairly easy to teach and implement, some are complex and will require practitioners to identify the necessary "pre-requisite" skills (e.g., conversational/social skills, cognitive skills, problem solving skills, assertive skills, etc.) that many parents/care givers may need to learn before tackling these skills. Practitioners and others who work with parents/care givers who are overwhelmed and are experiencing significant family problems also may need to identify and address other "barriers" to skill building (e.g., chaotic/disorganized household, lack of daily routines, time constraints, unmet basic needs, etc) before introducing many of the skills and their behavioral components.

The authors provide a brief annotated bibliography of "in-house" publications that are related to this guide. It would have been useful to include a more comprehensive list of other skill

building resources, as well as the references/citations for the source of some of the skills presented (e.g., Thomas Gordon's "active listening" and "I messages").

Practitioners who already have a solid grounding in skill building and teaching strategies will be able to use this guide very easily and may find it to be a useful resource for identifying the behavioral component and steps for a wide range of skills. The behavioral steps can provide a basic roadmap to use when teaching skills to families. New practitioners or paraprofessionals will need more specific training and experience in skills teaching before they can use this guide more effectively.

**Attachment Disorganization. J. & George C. Solomon. (Eds.)**  
**(1999). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.**

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Up-to-date, concise and well written, this ambitious book presents a comprehensive overview of current investigations and research on the construct of disorganized attachment. The editors have gathered prominent contributions from leading attachment researchers in their exploration and examination of the etiology of attachment disorganization, its social and cognitive sequelae, its impact in atypical populations, and its implications for practice.

Attachment theory holds that the early relationship between an infant and his or her primary care giver is biologically predisposed for purposes of safety and security and is a blue print for future relationships. Attachment classification (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978) came about through the research in Ainsworth's Strange Situation Study (1978). In assessing the effect of maternal separation on infant exploration and behavior, Ainsworth found that babies had differing responses when reunited with their mothers.

Three patterns of reunion in infants were identified. Some infants sought closeness to mother and wanted contact and comfort before returning to play. Mothers of these infants tended to be responsively attuned and sensitive to their infant's cues. These infants were subsequently



designated as securely attached. Other infants gave no special recognition to their mother upon her return and simply avoided her. They seemed blasé, nonchalant, and overly independent. These infants were designated as "insecure avoidant" infants. A third group of infants seemed to both approach their mother upon her return and simultaneously resist her efforts to comfort them. These infants needed soothing, but they would often walk away from their mother while looking at her. They were designated as "insecure ambivalent." In later research (Main and Solomon, 1990), an additional fourth group was discerned, composed of infants who did not fit any of the patterns already described and had no clear strategy for responding to care givers. Their behavior included freezing upon reunion, staring at the care giver as if they were in a confused daze, fearfulness toward the parent, and alternating clinging with intense avoidance. This group was classified as "disorganized." Subsequent research indicated that the infants in this latter category had usually experienced neglect and/or abuse, had mothers with severe bipolar illness, or experienced other environmental factors that had impacted adversely on their well-being.

Ainsworth and her associates (1978) and Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy (1985) have suggested that differences in reunion behavior reflect differences in the ongoing interactional relationship between infant and primary care giver, usually mother. These behaviors, which became the basic attachment paradigm, reflect the child's strategy for relating with the parent and coping with absences. Main and her colleagues (1985) argued that once these patterns of attachment are developed, they tend to persist and become part of the personality with implications for social and cognitive functioning. Current examinations of disorganized attachment focus on the impact of the parent's unresolved attachment trauma, frightening and frightened behavior of the parent and possible neurological and temperamental issues. Insecure attachment patterns are not considered pathological and although the disorganization classification suggests a higher risk for psychopathology, it does not, in itself constitute an attachment disorder.

The current research is reminiscent of another outstanding investigator in the area of child development, social worker Selma Fraiberg and her colleagues (1975). Fraiberg identified care givers who themselves were abused, neglected, or rejected as children, as being vulnerable to perpetuating destructive patterns of parenting, unless there had been a reworking and understanding of their early conflicts on both cognitive and emotional levels. Fraiberg believed the parents' unremembered past, despite good intentions, interfered with their relationship with their child as a result of defenses they used—largely, their denial of painful affects associated with unresolved trauma and their identification with their own parents' behavior.

Fraiberg also identified infant behaviors which were quite similar to the avoidance patterns described by Ainsworth (1982). However, Fraiberg believed there was an important



qualitative difference between the patterns she saw and those described by Ainsworth. Those differences were thought to exist because Ainsworth's population was presumably normal, while Fraiberg's clinical cases had reached pathological extremes of abuse and/or neglect. The infants Fraiberg observed ranged between three and eighteen months of age and had experienced extreme deprivation and stress in their relationships.

Although interventions based on attachment concepts are varied and diverse and depend on specific situations and context, they are always directed toward developing, enhancing, and maintaining the attachment relationships between primary care givers and children. Knowledge of attachment concepts are also used to ameliorate situations where there has been a disruption in the primary care giver relationship.

This volume should serve as a useful springboard for future research on attachment in general and the challenging disorganized attachment pattern, in particular. It contains valuable ideas that are thought provoking, often conflicted, and in some cases, suggestive of profound dilemmas. While written for readers with a fairly sophisticated understanding of attachment concepts, it is essential reading for professionals involved in child evaluation, consultation, expert testimony regarding children and their care givers, policy makers, and especially those involved with primary prevention.

Family preservation practitioners need to recognize and identify the at-risk symptoms of children with disorganized/disoriented patterns in order to refer to professionals with attachment expertise and/or formulate services directed toward therapeutic interventions. An important resource for Family Preservation work is the Appendix in this volume, which details procedures for identifying attachment disorganization.

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**Infants, Toddlers, and Families: A Framework for Support and Intervention. Martha Farrell Erickson, and Karen Kurz-Riemer. (1999). New York: The Guilford Press.**

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*Infants, Toddlers, and Families: A Framework for Support and Intervention* provides an excellent framework for early intervention with infants, toddlers, and their families. The authors reaffirm the importance of integrating theory and research to inform practice in regard to promoting optimal development of children. The authors' passion and wisdom of early childhood intervention are reflected in this book. They offer concrete information and illustrations for working with children from diverse backgrounds, including families from the general population, families of different cultures, disadvantaged families, and families with disabled children. They validate the need to focus on strengths more than deficits, to empower families by supporting them to gain their own power, to employ collaboration, and to share resources to support families in building the capacity of children.

Chapter 1 provides a brief historical overview of theories, research, and clinical findings that have supported and promoted early intervention with children and families. In this chapter, an important theme indicated by the authors is the need to focus on the child in the context of the family and the family in the context of the larger community. Likewise, in Chapter 2 the authors discuss the importance of developing a solid foundation of knowledge bases to inform practice. These knowledge bases include prevention and intervention research, clinical evidence, and basic developmental research. Although general conclusions from intervention research confirm the positive impact of early intervention, additional work needs to be done because outcomes have been modest and effects differ among disadvantaged, disabled, and



Chapter 3 offers ideas for identifying and building on parenting strengths. The authors suggest specific tasks that parents should complete to promote good child developmental outcomes. Among these tasks are building infant-care giver attachment and parental sensitivity. The authors also add that interventionists, care givers, and parents should work together to supply important ingredients to promote optimal learning and development. Examples of these ingredients include encouragement of exploration, mentoring in basic skills, celebration of developmental advances, guided rehearsal and extension of new skills, protection from inappropriate disapproval, teasing, or punishment, and provision of a rich and responsive language environment.

Chapter 4 presents ways for developing and enhancing parental knowledge and understanding child development and capabilities at different ages and stages. The authors suggest videotaping as the best tool for expanding parents' knowledge of children's capabilities. Central to this task is enabling parents to see through the eyes of the child. In developing and enhancing their knowledge, parents must examine the past and choose what to carry forward and what to leave behind. Likewise, they must take advantage of all available resources to help them in the process.

In Chapter 5, the authors focus on strengthening family support networks as a critical element in the development of children and functioning of families. The authors outline basic principles of family support, promote service collaboration for better family support, address barriers to using resources, and promote home visiting and parent support groups as family support strategies. Furthermore, the authors recommend building cultural competence, helping families adjust to the changing times, and communities, cultures and interventionists becoming partners with families.

This is an excellent resource for practitioners and educators as well as families. The book is comprehensive and practical, and its contribution will strengthen the field of early childhood intervention. The conceptualization of ideas and provision of concrete examples and illustrations will be useful for family-centered practice and research. The discussion on building cultural competence may benefit from additional in-depth examples and illustrations. Nonetheless, it is evident that the strength of the book is in its focus on children and families from diverse life situations.



**Solution-Based Casework: An Introduction to Clinical and Case Management Skills in Casework Practice. D. N. Christensen, J. Todahl, and W. C. Barrett. (1999). New York: Aldine De Gruyter.**

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I originally agreed to review this book as a professional courtesy to a colleague and personal friend. In reading it, however, what began as a review progressively became a professional reflection on the many successful outcomes that can be promoted through a pragmatically informed practice based on the primary assumption that humans develop; they do not pathologize. By pragmatic, I refer to a goal-oriented conceptualization of “what works” grounded in clearly defined theory and research, not an eclectic cookbook or “what I think ought to be.” By develop, I refer to the assumption that persons do the best they can, many times under very trying circumstances and possess the native competencies to modify their actions and instigate more positive solutions. As quoted by the authors of *Solution-Based Casework*, Burke (1997) argued,

Two major tendencies in all people from birth to death....the progressive and regressive trends in nature. Other things being equal, progressive trends are stronger....We must identify the progressive forces with which we can ally ourselves and which, at the appropriate time, we can help mobilize. (pp. 42-43)

The authors of *Solution-Based Casework* assert the importance of a solution-oriented assessment, case planning, and case management that takes into consideration “environmental factors, client competencies, family development, and relapse prevention strategies” (p. 3). They do this superbly throughout the book. One example offered by the authors particularly mirrored my own professional experience.

As a young Child Protection Team Psychologist, I was puzzled by the all-too-typical case recommendations of “counseling” and “parenting classes” for families where abuse was an issue. This was particularly so, given that many families were repeat offenders despite their

previous participation in these supposedly therapeutic endeavors. The authors' description that follows echoed my consistent request at case planning meetings and during court testimony:

If the case planning targets attendance at counseling and parenting classes as an objective, then attendance is what you will be measuring....If the case plan does not target the specific behavioral skills the family will need to avoid, interrupt, or escape their problem pattern, you won't be able to help them sort out where they allowed their problem pattern to escalate. Because you won't be able to help them identify where they became at risk, you won't be able to help them generate alternative responses to those situations. (pp. 126-127)

*Solution-Based Casework* offers the reader a resource for developing case plans that are "(1) tied to everyday life events, (2) are measurable, (3) are accountable, (4) specifically target high-risk behaviors, and (5) plan for relapse prevention" (p. 3), plans that in my experience promote successful outcomes.

The book is divided into three sections, with varying numbers of chapters in each section. Section I provides a foundation for the authors' position in which they skillfully incorporate elements of family-centered practice, ecological and competence perspectives, family life cycle theory, postmodern family casework, solution-focused family therapy, and relapse prevention theory. Section II considers assessment and case planning and does so in a very organized, concrete manner emphasizing "everyday life" issues that client families can come to better manage and develop from. The chapters in this section expound upon "working with client families" in contrast with "working on families." Section III highlights case management and treatment team issues. Chapter 11 is especially well-offered in describing "How Staff Experience Change;" challenges, success stories, and training recommendations for implementing staff development from a traditional deficit-focused, to solution-based casework model.

I would give *Solution-Based Casework* my highest recommendation for current practitioners. I would also recommend it for educators training future professionals but with one caveat. The practices promoted within this book require the professional to have attained a postformal level of cognitive development, where one can maintain a coherent theory and research base while simultaneously considering the day-to-day reality of a clinical context, join these two, and arrive at a synthesis of optimal professional practice. Depending upon the experience level of the trainee, they may need to be challenged intellectually and/or experientially in order to be able to fully appreciate and employ what this book offers. I personally plan to make it a required text in my Ph.D. level Family Therapy Practicum.



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**Childhood Sexual Abuse: An Evidence-Based Perspective.**  
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*Child Sexual Abuse* provides a very thorough and clear analysis of our present understanding regarding sexual abuse. The authors adopt an epidemiological approach which, they explain, contrasts with the previous prevailing approaches that were closely aligned with issues of the politics of gender and the politics of victimization. The research of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s was based largely on accounts of adult female survivors of childhood sexual abuse and interpreted in terms of a growing body of feminist theories that regarded sexual abuse as one of the manifestations of the patriarchal social structure that oppressed women. The authors explain that the epidemiological approach is freer of such bias and, therefore, brings more specific facts and factors to the fore.

Their epidemiological approach involves reviewing and collating findings of the past three decades about the prevalence, correlates, and consequences of childhood sexual abuse. Using this meta-analysis of previous epidemiological studies, the authors review the prevalence of sexual abuse during childhood, characteristics of victims and of perpetrators; the effects of child sexual abuse on children's functioning; the effects of child sexual abuse on later adult functioning; the data surrounding current controversies, such as the false memory syndrome.

A major contribution of this book's meta-analysis from an epidemiological perspective is that child abuse is not reified into a single phenomenon. Rather, the concept of child sexual abuse is deconstructed so that various types of abusive interaction are correlated with the effects



upon childhood and adult states. Objectifying and breaking down their data lead to a range of very interesting and helpful conclusions. For example, they are able to break down the stereotype that child sexual abuse is a male monopoly. Instead, their meta-analyses suggest that one in five perpetrators are female. As another example, their analyses indicate that, contrary to popular belief, the majority of child sexual abuse perpetrators have not been sexually abused as children. They also document the possibility of the nonspecific link between abuse and adult mental health problems rather than sexual abuse having specific psychological effects (such as causing eating disorders).

These and other findings have immense relevance for practitioners and educators. Clearly, efforts to prevent and ameliorate the effects of child sexual abuse are more effective to the extent that they are based upon reliable data. This concise yet thorough review of the research on child sexual abuse would be a helpful addition to a library of any professional involved in research or practice on child sexual abuse.

**Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy. F. Walsh. (1999).  
New York: Guilford Press**

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The stated purpose of this edited book is to support the work of family therapists by providing a variety of perspectives on spirituality, religion, and family therapy that are consistent with the editor's emphasis upon the strengths, collaboration, and systems perspectives. Part I is essentially a summary of literature authored by the editor. Part II contains 7 chapters, each written from a different religious or spiritual perspective. These perspectives range from African American to Buddhism and Judaism. Part III contains 7 chapters with various theoretical perspectives on spirituality and practice.

A welcome strength of the book is the editor's ecumenical and pluralistic emphasis. History has recorded many examples of how religious difference can lead to family, community, and international violence. This book models alternatives to violence and sensitivity to religious diversity for the family therapist and community activist. The chapters on spirituality and various ethnic minorities are especially original and may be useful to practitioners from all

helping professions. Overall, the editor has made a contribution by bringing the subject of spirituality to the attention of more family therapists.

This book has some of the problems common to edited texts. Linkages between the chapters are sometimes weak, and the emphasis upon spiritual plurism may create some confusion, particularly for the beginning reader. For example, although basic definitions of spirituality and religiosity are offered in Chapter One, the reader is not certain that the other 14 authors agree on these definitions or whether they indeed even distinguish between spirituality and religion. The distinction can become especially important when therapists deal with family members who have strong positive or negative transference about religiosity.

The book also has some of the problems sometimes associated with other recent scholarship in spirituality. Although Transpersonal Psychology is now over 25 years old, many new authors do not seem to consult the rich multi-professional literature that is already available to them in the broad area of spirituality and practice. The reviews of the literature in many of the chapters in this book seem to omit, for example, some of the most important authors in psychology (e.g., Ken Wilber) and social work (e.g., Au-Deane Cowley, Ed Canda). The uninformed reader may therefore remain unaware of the rich knowledge and theory that has been developed in recent decades.

This text would probably be particularly useful to family therapists who would like a collection of readings on the subject under one cover. Educators might find the book useful as a supplemental text for a required family therapy class or an elective on spirituality and family-centered practice.



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