

Review

A Family in Therapy

Peter McCallum and Moshe Lang.

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Price: \$14.99

I enjoyed reading this book. The idea of demystifying therapy appeals to me and there is no doubt that the authors have made a sincere attempt to do just that. It may be possible that their attempt limits the appeal of the book in some ways, particularly to therapists locked into intellectual and esoteric theoretical ideologies. It may be too, that there is enough technical language to cause the lay reader to lose interest when the important commentaries arte the next stage of the reading.

The Black family's words and interactional patterns are fascinating and familiar. It is interesting to read how family members react to each other and to the therapist. The view of family and therapist via the printed word looses the important component of process. Even observers viewing a tape cannot capture the emotions present in a room and there is no adequate way for them to be put down in words. So while we can read the discourse of change for the Black family we can never know the full process of change. I wonder whether the words and actions on the tape rekindled the emotions for the therapist; or was he already at the time of viewing too far removed from the experience of the process of therapy? This reader can only speculate on how the descriptions of therapy would have been enriched had the material covering the therapist's part in the family system been included in the text.

I was fascinated to read the views of other professionals so courageously recorded at the end of the book and was reminded of the diversity of views expressed by Bentovim, Byng-Hall, Cooklin, Gorell Barnes & Skynner (Family Therapy – Vol. 1 – 1982). Seldom do the views of practicing therapists concur – all we can aim for is a consensus which fits our own belief system. This section of "A Family in Therapy" could be of real value for the idealogues among family therapists and remind us to be generous, valuing and respectful of difference.

I wonder whether families will read this book, and if they do will they begin to ask some of their own questions, will they wish the authors had given advice or will they take up the challenge of responsibility for their own actions? Whoever the readers are they will find it a fascinating expose of the mystery of therapy.

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Ref: Bentovim, Gorrell Barnes, Cooklin – Family therapy Vol. 1; Different Views of a Health Family. 1982 London Academic Press.

Publication References:

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