

Book Reviews

REBECCA A. JONES, Ph.D., *Editor*

Walsh, F. *Strengthening Family Resilience* (2nd ed.) (2006). New York: Guilford Press, 384 pp., ISBN: 1593851866.

From a Walsh's first edition on family resilience appeared in 1998. With the myriad of changes affecting families from multiple perspectives, the author has revised and expanded her original work to include research and developments in the field. Given the reality of living in a "post 9/11" world, new thoughts on building family resilience are sorely needed in the present.

Walsh defines family resilience as "...the capacity to rebound from adversity strengthened and more resourceful" and is an active process of openly facing life's crises with a sense of endurance and growth. It is equally as important to understand what resilience is *not*. Resilience is more than mere "hanging on", surviving, getting through, or waiting until a difficult life period ends. Rather than leaving traumatic situations as angry, blaming victims, a resilient family system enables persons to find some sense of meaning, regain a sense of control about their lives, and discover the ability once again to live and love.

In today's culture there is great debate about what constitutes a "normal" family and what parameters define "normal" family functioning. Walsh thoughtfully responds to this debate as a helpful lens through which all of her ideas on family resilience may be framed. Two popular myths are debunked. The first is the assumption that "healthy" families are problem free. Second, she disputes the idea that there must be a universal model of a "healthy family." This idea, she argues, idealizes the past and does little to address the myriad of family models and issues of today. Walsh defines "family" in a broad fashion that includes various family forms, systems, and committed couple relationships.

The book is divided into four parts which allows the reader to move from the theoretical underpinnings of family resilience through helping families to build and sustain their own positive systems. Walsh also provides an extensive research base behind her assertions that adds to the overall worth of the book and makes it an authoritative work for the therapist interested in increasing positive functioning in family systems.

This is a “concentrated” volume; every page has much to offer in terms of research, theory, social concerns, and suggestions for clinical practice. Walsh helpfully makes the information usable through the use of tables found throughout the book that describe the basic issues that are enlightened in that particular area of discussion. Of possibly the greatest worth, Walsh writes from a positive perspective. Rather than approach the topic from a pathological stance, Walsh advances a perspective of hope that thoughtful therapists may enhance family resilience by understanding how to increase this commodity in all situations of life and experience.

*W. Cris Cannon, D. Min.,
Nashville, TN*

Kerig, P. K. (Ed.) (2005). *Implications of Parent-Child Boundary Dissolution for Developmental Psychopathology: Who Is the Parent and Who Is the Child?* New York: Haworth Press, 297 pp., ISBN: 0789030918.

Boundary dissolution is a broad and poorly defined construct, described in the psychotherapy literature in various terms, including parentification, role reversal, enmeshment, psychological control, and triangulation. Each of the eleven chapters in Kerig’s book addresses a different aspect of boundary dissolution. These articles help to define appropriate levels of boundary dissolution at different stages of development and in different contexts. Both adaptive and maladaptive aspects of parentification are addressed, helping clinicians form a balanced view of the effects of boundary differences in families.

The first few chapters of the book review conceptual and methodological issues related to boundary dissolution. These articles address how children at different developmental levels are affected by boundary dissolution. Children and adolescents experiencing boundary dissolution have a variety of task demands placed upon them, though their own individual level of functioning affects the extent to which these expectations alter their development. The articles in this section also discuss risk factors for negative effects of boundary dissolution, such as gender and life stressors.

The second collection of articles looks at how boundary dissolution affects the family system. The authors discuss topics ranging from how boundary dissolution is part of a multigenerational transmission process to the effects of interparental conflict on family functioning. The next part of the book examines boundary dissolution in families affected by divorce. The articles go beyond presenting divorce as a risk factor for boundary dissolution by investigating how the parents’ behavior through the divorce period actually changes the family structure.

The final section focuses on cultural aspects of boundary dissolution. These authors emphasize how boundary dissolution is understood and managed across different cultural groups. For example, “perception of duty” differs between collectivist and individualist cultures, leading to different outcomes for children from different groups. When boundary dissolution occurs, adolescents in collectivist cultures may interpret their new roles as part of their duty, resulting in less maladaptive outcomes. An interesting and novel chapter in this section examines the concept of boundary dissolution in twentieth century novels. The author describes how commonplace the idea of boundary dissolution has become in American culture, so much so that literature takes the occurrence of the phenomenon for granted in its fictional accounts of people’s lives.

Kerig’s collection of writings on boundary differences furthers our understanding of boundary dissolution and its effects across cultures and across various developmental stages. This text helps to pull together the often discrepant literature on boundary differences, going beyond a very simple concept of parentification as a pathogenic process. Taken together, these authors remind us that boundaries necessarily change with development, with family structure, and with culture. It may now be understood that boundary differences are not universally pathological and must be explored in their developmental and cultural contexts.

Avital K. Herbin, M.A.
Argosy University
Atlanta, GA

Copyright of American Journal of Family Therapy is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.