

A Handbook of Divorce and Custody: Forensic, Developmental, and Clinical Perspectives

Edited by Linda Gunsberg and Paul Hymowitz. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 2005. 409 pp. \$79.95 (hardcover).

Reviewed by Susan Williams, PhD

Linda Gunsberg and Paul Hymowitz strove for the lofty goal of developing a guide for both legal and mental health professionals in all the areas affecting parents and children involved in custody disputes. They were successful in their efforts. *A Handbook of Divorce and Custody* deals with a multitude of custody matters from better-known areas such as domestic violence to lesser-known problems such as parental alienation. The authors also address uncomfortable topics, such as incest and spousal infidelity with someone within the extended family or close to the family.

The book is divided into six sections with 27 chapters. At times, it appears to be a bit scattered. Seemingly related chapters are found in different sections, and sections contain diverse chapter topics. The editors, however, consistently subdivide the information within the chapters into an introduction and background followed by legal issues, developmental issues, examples, and recommendations. The majority of the chapter authors do a good job of providing facts on their topics. For example, one of the strongest and most useful chapters in the book for clinicians and evaluators working in this field is Chapter 5, "Ethical and Legal Considerations in Child Custody Evaluations." This chapter contains sections on the ethical standards of psychology, legal consider-

ations, and risk management strategies. It is presented clearly and concisely.

Chapter 6 is another helpful chapter. In "Home Is Where the Hurt Is: Developmental Consequences of Domestic Conflict and Violence for Children and Adolescents," the author delineates types of domestic conflict and violence, parental reactions, and the effects on children. Some case examples are included. The author then makes specific recommendations for the expert in handling these cases.

Chapter 12, "The Rights of Parents and Stepparents: Toward a Redefinition of Parental Rights and Obligations," provides practical guidance and reminds the reader that when parents are married, they generally understand that they have parental obligations. It is only when they are divorcing that they begin to refer to their parental rights. It is the role of the clinician/evaluator to remind the parents that divorce does not relieve them of their responsibilities and obligations as parents.

Overall, the *Handbook* is a useful way for experienced clinicians and evaluators to review lesser-known areas and to challenge some conventional thinking and popular myths. It addresses the oftentimes contrary notions of "the best interests of the child" and "parents' rights." It is a must-have for clinicians and evaluators new to the field of divorce and custody or those thinking about entering the field. The *Handbook* might have been more useful if assessment by standardized testing had been addressed in greater detail. Chapter 16, "Empirically Assisted Assessment of Family Systems," only briefly addresses the role of traditional tests. Nevertheless, *A Handbook of Divorce and Custody* is a valuable guide for mental health and legal experts in understanding the interchange between legal considerations and the psychological aspects of divorce and custody.