

Beyond intuition and tradition

Grounding practice in Family
Systems Theory and multi-
methodological systemic research

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Presentation



01

**Professor at the
Western Norway
University of
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02

**Adjunct professor
at VID Specialized
University**

03

**Written numerous
articles, written
and edited a lot of
books related to
systemic practice/
therapy**

JACOB B. PRIEST

THE SCIENCE OF FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

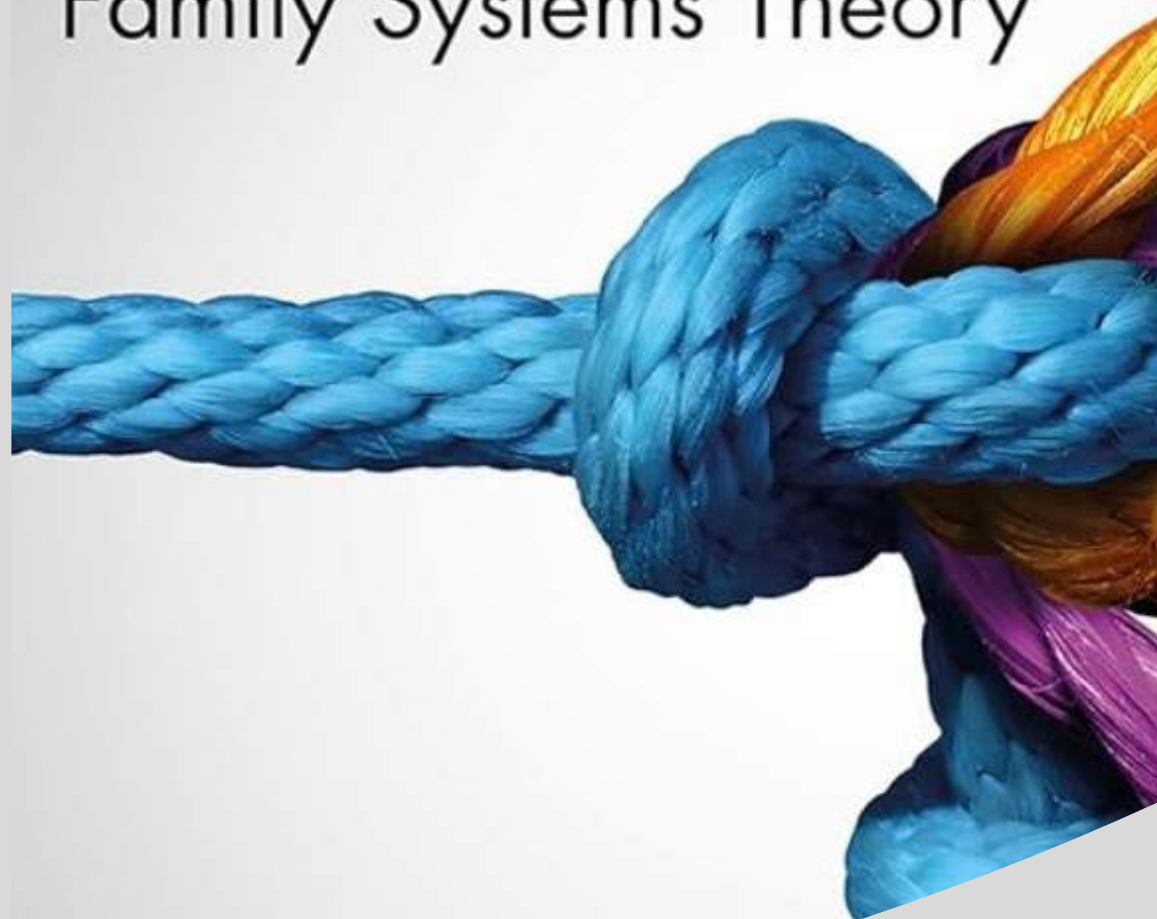
Foundations for
Effective Clinical Practice

Second Edition

JACOB B. PRIEST

SYSTEMIC DIAGNOSIS

The Application of
Family Systems Theory



Beyond intuition and tradition



01

A close look at the epistemological and methodological foundations for the field of family therapy

02

Challenge us to move beyond intuition and tradition

03

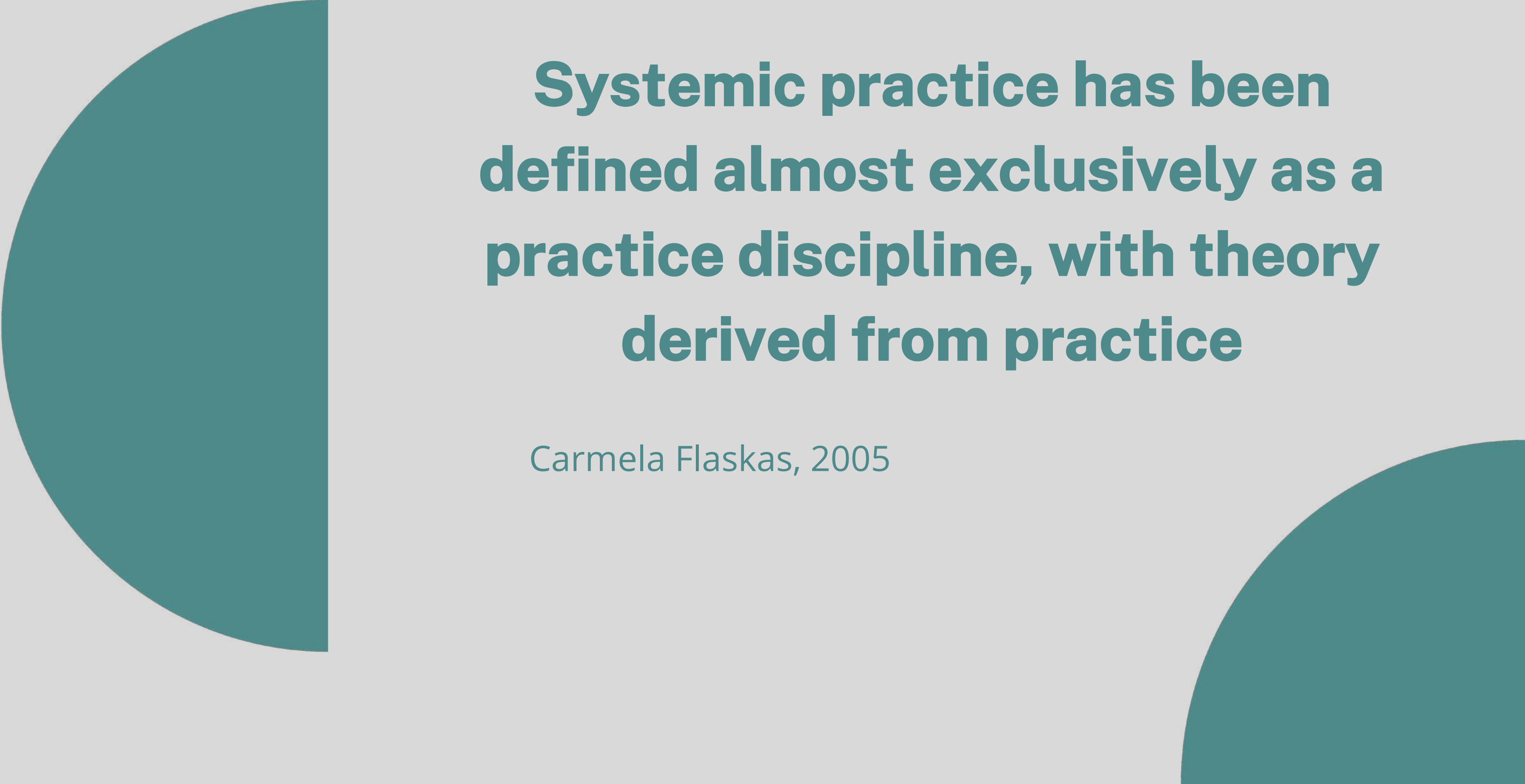
In order to secure a field that remains deeply human and relational at the same time as being anchored in research and evidence

The future of family therapy depends on our ability to bring together the richness of our systemic traditions with the grounding of empirical evidence

Lorås et al., 2023



Family Process,
62(3), 947-960



**Systemic practice has been
defined almost exclusively as a
practice discipline, with theory
derived from practice**

Carmela Flaskas, 2005

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

FAMILY PROCESS

Researching what we practice: The paradigm of systemic family research: Part 1

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Abstract
This is part 1 of two articles that focus on the ideological and philosophical preference regarding how to relate to and conduct research in the field of systemic couple and family therapy. Thus, this article outlines the theoretical groundwork for part 2 of “Researching what we practice” in the same journal. *Research* in certain areas of systemic couple and family therapy (CFT), such as that influenced by social constructionism and postmodernism, has a different epistemological tradition than in the natural sciences. Thus, only research from a narrow, selected spectrum of epistemologies has been incorporated as a key source in the knowledge base of systemic CFT. The consequence is that the field of postmodern systemic CFT risks promoting only a limited range of research designs and knowledge while excluding other designs and knowledge types, reasoning that these are less useful in clinical practice. The rationale behind this perspective is derived from ideology and philosophy rather than scientific criteria. Accordingly, in our field of study, different epistemological perspectives are easily viewed as dichotomous, thus causing professional gaps in our field. This tendency constrains the mutual exchange and development that are needed. We present a possible way out of this dichotomized deadlock, first and foremost by acknowledging – and encouraging the – the full breadth of existing knowledge and perspectives in the field.

Family Process, 62(3),
947-960.

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

FAMILY PROCESS

Researching what we practice—The paradigm of systemic family research: Part 2

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Abstract
This is the second of two articles focusing on ideological and philosophical preferences for relating to and conducting research in the field of systemic couple and family therapy (CFT). To emphasize the need for the field of systemic CFT to be based on the best available knowledge, in the first article, we argue the benefits of using the principles of evidence-based practice, and in the current article, we present the rationale behind the contents of a program for systemic family therapy research that safeguards methodological multiplicity. The program for multi-methodological systemic research is also organized on the basis of the authors' self-reflexive account of overcoming barriers to learning skills and deepening their understanding of quantitative methods. We argue that trans-methodological reflexivity is necessary, and we argue a preference for methodological multiplicity that includes statistical competency as regards the dependence of observations (i.e., nonindependence). In addition, we further argue that these are crucial components of a systemic research program.

KEYWORDS
epistemology, methodological multiplicity, systemic couple and family therapy

Family Process, 62(3),
961-975

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

JOURNAL OF FAMILY THERAPY

Taking empirical evidence seriously v.2.0¹

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Abstract
This article discusses the status and challenges related to the basic perspective of knowledge and scientific practice. This article points out that some of the field (i.e. collaborative dialogical practice) has a preference for knowledge obtained through qualitative rather than quantitative studies. This is problematic, partly based on methodology and partly on the consequences that entails in the provision of knowledge to students and systemic practitioners. The consequences of such a preference may be that systemic practitioners will not acquire significant knowledge, and that they are not encouraged to conduct or participate in quantitative studies. This article highlights a stronger focus on the field's basic premises, as well as key political, ethical and professional policies. In response, the article presents the theoretical perspective of interactive constructivism and critical realism, which proposes that these become the guiding principles for systemic practice.

Journal of Family
Therapy, 46, 89- 102



Bertrando, 2009

**Systemic therapy
tends to drift away
from the field of
psychiatry**

Evidence-based practice



01

**Systematically
collected
research- based
knowledge
The professional
experience we
bring into the room**

02

**The wishes and
needs of clients in
each situations**

03

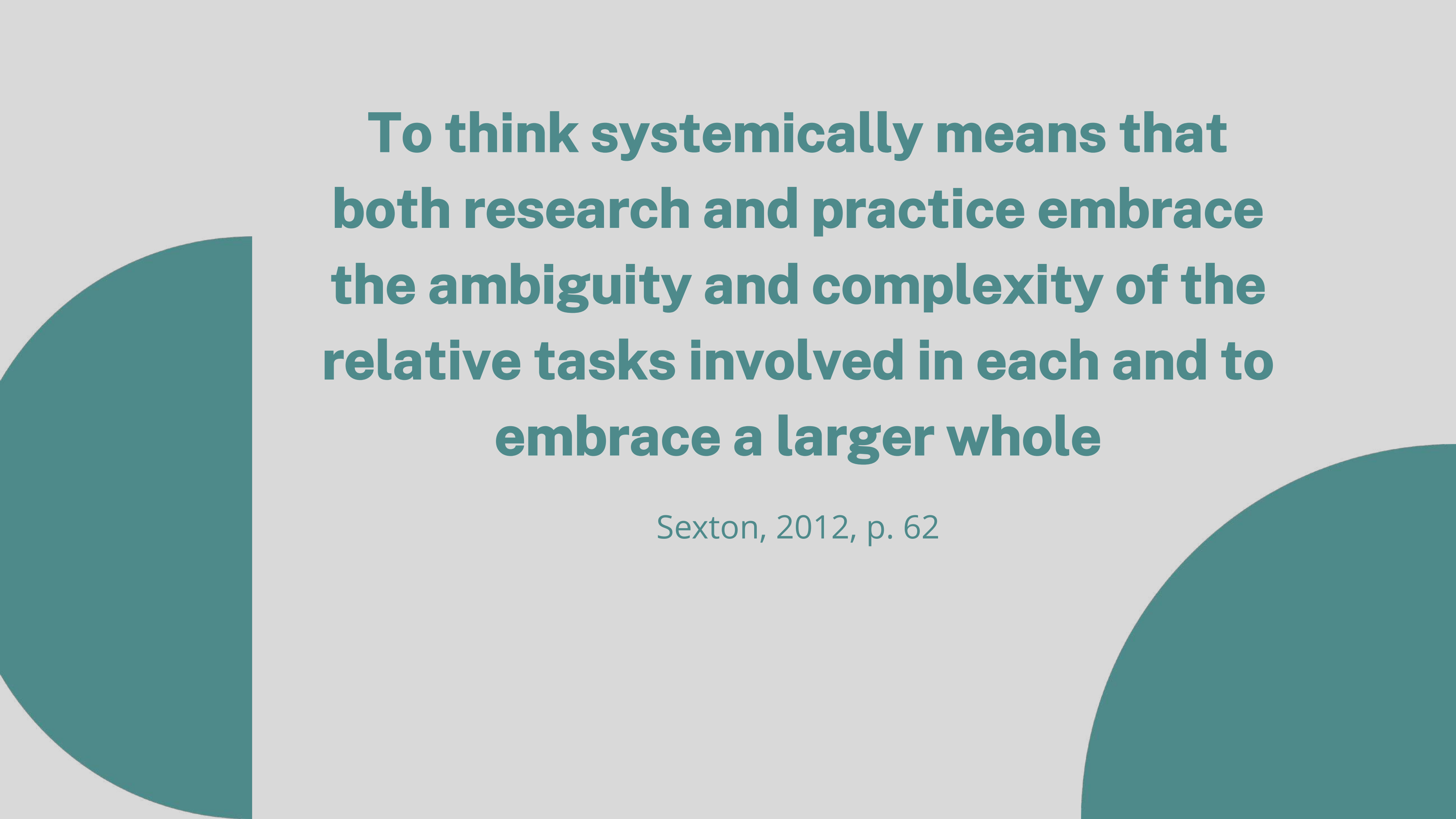
RAPPORT

2023

"MIXED METHODS" SYSTEMATISK OVERSIKT

Co-terapi og
reflekterende team i par-
og familieterapi

**Our theories are never
stronger than the empirical
research that supports them**



**To think systemically means that
both research and practice embrace
the ambiguity and complexity of the
relative tasks involved in each and to
embrace a larger whole**

Sexton, 2012, p. 62

**Critical realism can help us move beyond
the false choice between postmodernism
and naive positivism**



Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST)

01

**Systematically
collected
research- based
knowledge**

02

**The professional
experience we
bring into the room**

03

**The wishes and
needs of clients in
each situations**





**“Big relations and small relations,
it’s all the same thing... For study
purposes you have to work with
small ones sometimes, then
people blame you for working
with small ones. Then you start
working with big ones, and they
blame you for being a mystic. It’s
all the same business...”**

Methodological breadth



01

Methodological breadth: we need qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies – all enriching each other.

02

Evidence requirements: clients, society, and health systems expect our practice to rest on the best available knowledge.

03

Complementarity: different research traditions should not compete, but complement one another in strengthening systemic practice.

04

Theory: We must base our methods on empirically supported theories. One such framework is family systems theory.