

## Comparative Study of Static and Dynamic Representations of the Family Structure and Its Clinical Utility

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**Abstract :** The patterns of personality (mal)function and the individuals' psychosocial environment influence the healthy status collectively and may lie in the background of psychosomatic disorders. Although the patients with their diversified symptoms usually do not have any organic problems, the experienced complaint, the fear of serious illness and the lack of social support often lead to increased anxiety and further enigmatic symptoms. The role of the family system and its atmosphere seem to be very important in this process. More studies explored the characteristics of dysfunctional family organization: inflexible family structure, hidden conflicts that are not spoken about by the family members during their daily interactions, undefined role boundaries, neglect or overprotection of the children by the parents and coalition between generations. However, questionnaires that are used to measure the properties of the family system are able to explore only its unit and cannot pay attention to the dyadic interactions, while the representation of the family structure by a figure placing test gives us a new perspective to better understand the organization of the (sub)system(s). Furthermore, its dynamic form opens new perspectives to explore the family members' joint representations, which gives us the opportunity to know more about the flexibility of cohesion and hierarchy of the given family system. In this way, the communication among the family members can be also examined. The aim of my study was to collect a great number of information about the organization of psychosomatic families. In our research we used Gehring's Family System Test (FAST) both in static and dynamic forms to mobilize the family members' mental representations about their family and to get data in connection with their individual representations as well as cooperation. There were four families in our study, all of them with a young adult person. Two families with healthy participants and two families with asthmatic patient(s) were involved in our research. The family members' behavior that could be observed during the dynamic situation was recorded on video for further data analysis with Noldus Observer XT 8.0 program software. In accordance with the previous studies, our results show that the family structure of the families with at least one psychosomatic patient is more rigid than it was found in the control group and the certain (typical, ideal, and conflict) dynamic representations reflected mainly the most dominant family member's individual concept. The behavior analysis also confirmed the intensified role of the dominant person(s) in the family life, thereby influencing the family decisions, the place of the other family members, as well as the atmosphere of the interactions, which could also be grasped well by the applied methods. However, further research is needed to learn more about the phenomenon that can open the door for new therapeutic approaches.

**Keywords :** psychosomatic families, family structure, family system test (FAST), static and dynamic representations, behavior analysis

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