



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 22
Issue 2 June

Article 13

June 1995

Review of *Reflection and Controversy: Essays in Social Work*. Ann Hartman. Reviewed by Ram A. Cnaan, University of Pennsylvania.

Ram A. Cnaan
University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Cnaan, Ram A. (1995) "Review of *Reflection and Controversy: Essays in Social Work*. Ann Hartman. Reviewed by Ram A. Cnaan, University of Pennsylvania.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 22: Iss. 2, Article 13.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.2249>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol22/iss2/13>

This Book Review is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

very issues. Indeed, the title of this section does not seem consistent with what has been presented, and much of it seems to be repetitive of previous sections.

In conclusion, although this book examines some important issues for undergraduate students, in many areas it falls short of demonstrating the complexities of those issues. In pursuit of the laudable goal of covering a lot of ground, the authors have oversimplified some complicated issues. If used as an undergraduate text, the book should be accompanied by classroom discussion to fill in these gaps.

Terri Combs-Orme
University of Tennessee

Ann Hartman *Reflection & Controversy: Essays in Social Work*, Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers Press, 1994, \$21.95, papercover.

Royal museums in foreign countries hold a certain fascination for me. I am especially drawn to the crown jewel collections. I am attracted not by the value of the individual gems which is usually enormous but rather by the history that these collections represent: the history of the country and its kings and queens. I mention this because I was recently impressed by another collection but this time the gems were literary ones. I am referring to *Reflection & Controversy: Essays in Social Work* by Ann Hartman.

Reflection & Controversy is a collection of essays: twenty-three editorials written by Ann Hartman during her four-and-a-half year tenure as editor-in-chief of *Social Work* and two essays commissioned by Hartman, one by Caitlin C. Ryan on the role of social work in AIDS; the other by Liane V. Davis on violence in families. The diversity of topics makes this book truly a collection of intellectual gems. As Carel B. Germain notes in the foreword: "The essays cover a wide range of issues from homelessness to political correctness, from children in a careless society to aging as a feminist issue, from health care to war and peace, from narrative theory to revolution and backlash in our gay and lesbian communities" (p. viii). And the list of gems goes on and on.

Linda Bebee, managing editor for NASW Press, points out in the preface that many of Hartman's editorials generated both bouquets and brickbats from readers. I am not surprised. A wise and brave woman, Hartman holds fast to her beliefs whatever the pressures. For example, when most Americans were rallying behind President Bush and the military during Operation Desert Storm in 1992, Hartman wrote: "Fairly quickly, as our mechanized might seemed so successful in the early hours of the war, I found to my horror that my sense of helplessness was momentarily relieved as I identified with American military power. Our team was winning and the excitement was catching. But that was not the way I wanted to become empowered" (p. 74).

Hartman is also able to go beyond the surface of an issue as in her editorial on abortion. Aware that social work tends to take a very strong and vocal position in favor of "pro-choice," she warns of extremism on both sides of the issue and urges social workers to bridge, rather than polarize, the two camps. I am sure that this editorial kept the NASW mailroom busy for a long time.

The essays in *Reflection & Controversy* present a fully-rounded portrait of Ann Hartman, Editor. The NASW editorial board wisely chose to present the essays in this book, not chronologically, but in seven key sections that begin with Hartman's editorial philosophy, move to the political arena and conclude with social policy issues and the profession. The essays, though not contextually related, are structurally related. In each essay, Hartman presents the issue, provide key references, charts directions for social work, and concludes with steps that can and should be taken on the issue. Students, professionals, and academicians alike will find that Hartman has provided important source and background material that will be useful in the study of any of the issues covered in the book.

In the first four essays, Hartman discusses her editorial policy during her tenure at NASW. I personally am impressed by the extent of her involvement with the journal. As a contributor of the journal, most of my correspondence was with the managing editor and the Washington, DC office. I had no clue if Ann Hartman read my manuscripts, either those that

were accepted or those that were rejected. But reading these essays makes it very clear that Hartman set a new course for the journal. She says four criteria guided her editorship: 1) appreciation of many methods of data generation, 2) a search for subjugated knowledge especially that which reflects social work clients, 3) making the journal reader friendly for practitioners, and 4) "to include articles that cover the broad range of interests, activities, and concerns of social workers" (p. 5). In another editorial she notes the inclusion of on-going Op-Ed column and Notes from the Field.

Hartman was no rubber-stamp editor. When she disagreed with a policy taken by the NASW which publishes *Social Work*, she did not hesitate to say so. In "A Profession Chasing its Own Tail-Again," Hartman discusses how a collaborative effort to certify clinical social workers eventually broke down. In no way does Hartman favor NASW position but warn us that conflicts and rifts are a sad part of our professional history. What makes this essay even more powerful is that Hartman reviews the history of internal conflicts in social work and concludes that "most important, let us keep the welfare of our clients our most important priority" (p. 163).

The final essay in *Reflection & Controversy: Essays in Social Work* deals with issues of power and empowerment. Although empowerment is a sacred concept in our profession, Hartman dares to say that "it may be that we have not really examined the dilemmas that emerge and the choices to be made when a profession adopts empowerment as a mission. It may be that empowerment exists more in our professional discourse than in actual practice" (p. 171). She then discusses sources of power in social work and concludes that "all social workers deal with issues of power. The choices we make concerning how to deal with our power and our agency's power are crucial" (p. 176). In a profession that shies from power, it takes someone like Ann Hartman, with years of experience and infinite wisdom, to remind us that we do have power and that power is an instrument to use constructively.

In sum, this is no ordinary book. No one key theme is developed and defended. *Reflection & Controversy: Essays in Social Work* is however, a royal collection of intellectual gems; a lively

and fascinating testimony to social work history between 1989 and 1993 and to Ann Hartman, a human being and editor of the most widely distributed scholarly journal in social work.

Ram A. Cnaan, Ph.D.
University of Pennsylvania

Eleanor Reardon Tolson, William J. Reid and Charles D. Garvin, *Generalist Practice: A Task-Centered Approach*. New York: Columbia, University Press, 1994. \$37.50 hardcover.

This book is an effort to blend the task-centered approach to social work practice with generalist practice or, as the authors put it, to marry those two orientations. The book is designed to be used in social work practice classes for undergraduate and entry level—presumably foundation level—graduate students in social work. Generalist practice is the required orientation of baccalaureate degree and foundation MSW study according to the Council on Social Work Education accreditation standards.

The task-centered approach is a product of the early 1970's and was initially developed by William Reid and Laura Epstein. The authors place the task-centered approach within the context of problem-solving approaches to social work practice which, they say, were first articulated by Helen Harris Perlman and have since been explicated by others including Beulah Compton and Burt Galloway. The first book on the subject was called *Task-Centered Casework*, which was published by Reid and Epstein in 1972.

Task-centered practice is characterized by a focus on specific problems, which are addressed with clients in time-limited ways. There are procedures, tasks, and activities used for implementing the approach and to ameliorate identified problems. The focus is on the present and the methods are based upon research about practice as well as tested through research. The task-centered approach, or TC as the authors call it, is not tied to any one theory of human behavior.

This book goes beyond the earlier works of Reid and Epstein and applies the task-centered model to five systems in which social workers intervene—individuals, families, groups,