

A Narrative Interview with Ann Hartman

Part Two: The Importance of Context

This is the second part of a narrative interview with Ann Hartman. In it she discusses her work in child welfare and family-centered social work practice as a social worker and social work administrator. She also reflects on her career as a social work educator and as a writer, discussing some of her major influences and ideas. The third and final installment of this interview will appear in the next issue [Reflections: Winter 1999].

by
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Introduction

This interview covers Ann's professional experience as a social worker, social service administrator, professor, and scholar.

Although she worked as a child welfare worker for only a few years before attending Smith College for her MSW, child welfare became an important professional area of interest and expertise. Ann became the first executive director of the Southeast Nassau Guidance Center, the faculty director of the National Child Welfare Training Center, and the co-editor with Joan Laird of *A Handbook of Child Welfare*.

The interview explores her work with families and her involvement in the family therapy movement. In addition to her work at the Southeast Nassau Guidance Center and Mid-Nassau Community Mental Health Center, Ann was the co-founder of the Ann Arbor Center for the Family and co-authored, again with Joan Laird, *Family Centered Social Work Practice*. Ann's exposure to major figures in family therapy and her involvement as a charter member of the American Family Therapy Academy, particu-

larly her work with other leading women family therapists within the organization, are covered in the interview.

Ann's doctoral studies at Columbia University and her teaching career at Fordham University and The University of Michigan are discussed. She reflects on her academic innovations while serving as the head of the practice sequence at Michigan.

Ann discusses her career as a writer and also her professional partnership with Joan Laird. As well as writing for professional journals, Ann was also a columnist for *True Love* magazine.

Ann describes the importance of Caryl Chessman as a professional influence and shares her admiration for Michael White. She comments on the significance of constructionism in her current thinking and work.

Although this interview does not cover Ann's entire career, it does illustrate the range of her interests and her many areas of expertise. Ann's tremendous energy and her capacity to provide leadership (both administratively and intellectually) in a variety of settings and contexts are important themes in the interview. Many of Ann's ideas

and much of her work are connected by her profound respect for the importance of context, which stems from her own experiences as a child (see part one in *Reflections*, Summer 1998). Ann expresses her gratitude to her clients for having taught her so much.

Part three of this interview will be published in the next issue, Winter 1999 [Reflections Volume 5, Number 1]: Ann Hartman discusses her recent work and reflects upon the meaning of her career.

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The Interview

Joshua Miller: I would like to go over with you what your experience was like as both a social worker and a social work educator.

Ann Hartman: Well, I was in social work before I went to social work school. I was in public child welfare as a foster care worker for almost three years and had a very good experience with good supervision and learned a lot about real social social work. It was in a rural district in Ohio. We had an institution and I had kids in the institution on my caseload and had a lot of contact with them. And then I went to Smith College School for Social Work. That preprofessional experience was the last time I worked in child welfare, but I ended up very much involved with child welfare. Later in my career I was the faculty director of the National Child Welfare Training Center at the University of Michigan, which was a marvelous opportunity, and Joan Laird and I put together the *Handbook on Child Welfare*, which turned out to be sort of a teacher's compendium. (It didn't sell a lot but I think it was widely used by faculties teaching in child welfare and in child and family services.)

When I first went to Michigan (by then, of course, I was very much a family person and had been for years), they got a grant from the Clark Foundation to develop training materials for special-needs adoption and for more modern adoption practice. They asked me to be the faculty director and I said, "Well, you know child welfare is not my area of expertise—family is, and if



Ann Hartman

you put me in this job it is going to be family-centered child welfare." I have always felt that child welfare was too child centered and I think it should be family centered and child focused. They said fine and I began to do a lot of training on family assessment. It was a wonderful project. It was called Project Craft and there were three centers around the country training workers, supervisors, and agency administrators. We even began training judges and attorneys to really make a major shift in the adoption field in the country in order to bring about special-needs adoptions. It was financed by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. They put a great deal of money into child welfare. I did lectures and training sessions on family assessment and the project staff wanted to publish the materials, so they recorded my workshop and then typed it out and gave it to me. I revised it and put it together and that was the first book I published, *Family Assessment and Adoption*.

Then the staff and I at Project Craft applied for the National Child Welfare Training Center grant from the federal government and we got it. Under Jimmy Carter, federal money became available for training centers through the Children's Bureau to develop training in schools of social work across the country. We developed training materials on child welfare with a particular focus on different racial and ethnic families. That was a grant of something like a million dollars, which at that time was a lot of money. We had a wonderful time.

Another thing that happened was [that] when the Child Welfare Reform Act was passed, the Children's Bureau wanted to sponsor a big seminar in Washington and get the House of Representatives on board to vote funds for it. They asked us to organize and plan it and to bring in the top child welfare people. They gave us \$25,000 to do this. It was so much fun because child welfare had been at the bottom professionally, in terms of status, for so long and here we were being wined and dined. So we ran a seminar for staff from Congress and Rosalyn Carter had us over for tea at the White House where we walked around everywhere and looked at everything. And then we had dinner at the home of one of the cabinet secretaries, I think of Energy. It was great to have that experience.

The National Child Welfare Training Center was the flagship training center that coordinated twelve other centers at schools of social work around the country. It was an enormous project. We did a lot of research on what was happening in training. Too much! I think we spent too much energy on research and we would have done more on product development if we hadn't done so much research.

J: Was this the research that led to the *Handbook of Child Welfare*?

A: No, that was something that Joan and I did on our own. I developed so many contacts in the child welfare field, and Joan had worked in child welfare for years. We had so much conviction about a family focus in child welfare and knew other people that felt that way, so we were able to design the book from beginning to end. We didn't just ask for chapters; we gave everyone chapter outlines so that it would be a coherent project.

So I had this early child welfare experience which later, combined with my interest in families, turned out to be a very important part of my career.

J: What do you make of the fact that child welfare continued to be such a professional theme for you?

A: It was serendipitous. Michigan just came and asked me to do this. Phil Fellin was the Dean at Michigan and he had a philosophy that whatever the faculty wanted to do they should do. He was very supportive and hands off. That is what I wanted to do and I got release time and the projects bought out some of my teaching time.

As a matter of fact, after my first two years at Michigan, I never had time to do field advising because I always had some project going. Some part of my time was always being bought out by these projects in child welfare.

J: And was that a good professional development?

A: It was a wonderful opportunity. I met wonderful people and I had a great staff.

J: From what you are saying it sounds like there were three themes that started to converge for you as you progressed, which were child welfare, a family orientation, and a focus on ethnicity.

A: Ethnicity was very, very important in the child welfare work because adoption had been white. We did one publication, a book, describing all of the outreach programs that had been developed around the country to reach out to potential adoptive parents of color. Then we did training materials on different ethnic groups. We did one on Black families and children, Native American families and children, Hispanic, etc. We went across the board gathering training and teaching materials. Then we had a wonderful seminar. We brought in Carol Stack and Elaine Pinderhughes and some other people and we sat around the table and just talked about the issues. That was published as a conversation in a book, a lovely little book.

It was a crazy time for me. I was teaching a full load at the University of Michigan and then we had founded the Ann Arbor Center for the Family, which was an extremely important part of my life. It was all lined up on one street: the Ann Arbor Center for the Family, where we were doing practice and training; the University of Michigan, where I was employed full-time; and down the road was the National Child Welfare

Training Center. It was pretty exciting.

J: How did you manage to do three things like that at the same time?

A: Workaholism, and I inherited a tremendous amount of energy.

J: It sounds like it is a lot to keep track of—just the administration of the three things. What did you do at the Ann Arbor Center for the Family?

A: I saw clients and did training. I saw lots of families. There was a wonderful group of colleagues at the Center and they really were like an extended family. I was there about 15 to 20 hours a week—nights and Saturdays—plus writing the two books.

J: So really, it was like having four jobs.

A: It was a wild time.

J: Let me back up a little bit because there is a lot in between that we didn't cover.

A: Yes, I graduated from Smith and I went to New York in 1954 and I told you about being on the train and deciding I would cancel my interview at Jewish Board of Guardians (JBG) because I didn't think they were doing social work. And I went to Community Service Society (CSS). I ended up in the Queens District Office. I was there for four years. I think a family agency offers a marvelous experience in terms of the clients that they see.

J: What did you mainly do at CSS?

A: We were seeing people—doing casework ala Gordon Hamilton. After two years they gave me a unit of Columbia students. So I had two years of supervising Columbia students. At the same time, Joe Vigilante, Bob Sunley, and I began to see clients at night (I have always worked two jobs) at Mid-Nassau Community Mental Health Center. They were starting a little mental health clinic. This was the very beginning of the com-

munity mental health movement. We used to see people down in the basement of the Lutheran Church in Hicksville. I think we charged \$5.00 a session and I used to get \$3.00. And we would sit at these little tables on children's chairs because we were in the Sunday school.

I was living out on Long Island and commuting into Queens and then I heard that another clinic was starting in the Southern part of Nassau County in Seaford, so I applied for the job of Chief Social Worker and, unbelievably, I got it. I was only four years out of school but I just lucked out. So I began working there, started the first day it opened. I was very involved in the community mental health movement then for the next eight years. I became the Executive Director, and the center grew and we had units of students from Columbia and had a very big program. At the beginning there were just four of us—a part-time psychiatrist, a part-time psychologist, and two social workers—with a population of about 250,000 to serve, with no other services available. We had five hundred applications for service our first year.

J: At this stage of your career, what would you say were some of your key ideas? Were they the same or different then as they are now?

A: We developed a crisis intervention program, not for psychiatric crises but for event crises. We mean we had publicity for our program all over in funeral homes, police stations—we really did crisis intervention. And that became a very important part of my professional life. I began to do workshops all over on crisis intervention because we had so much experience of doing this at the center. Lydia Rappaport had written about it and it was wonderful, but we actually did it in a community clinic. And that was in the 1950's or early 60's.

Then we invited Sanford Sherman of the Jewish Family Service of New York, who was very close to Nathan Ackerman and one of the founders of family therapy, to consult. Sherman lived in our community and was on our advisory board and we asked him to train us in family work. And that was about 1961 or 62, so very early in the development of family work.

J: Was that your first exposure to formal training in family work?

A: Yes, to formal family work.

J: But it sounds like you already had a very strong feeling about the importance of the family, going back to your first job.

A: Absolutely, always. I think the valuable concept is the importance of context in people's lives and the family is one of the contexts. So, therefore, the family is important.

J: Where did you develop that idea, that context is important?

A: Oh, I think I told you I scolded my mother about doing work without paying sufficient attention to the context—the environment is so important.

J: It sounds like that is something that has been with you since you can remember.

A: Always. I think I told you the story about my school experience, that I was a terrible school problem and all I had to do was go to another school and that was the end of my school problem, overnight. If I think about how my life has changed and my thinking has changed, I think I am still into context. I just think that over my career I have had a more sophisticated concept of the nature of context. And now with social constructionism, there is the next layer of a sophisticated notion about the nature of context and the relationship between people and context. I remember Carel Germain and I used to talk about getting the hyphen out of person-in-situation because individuals are not separate from their environment.

I was extremely involved in the Southeast Nassau Guidance Center for eight years. We had five hundred volunteers, we were raising money, we had the County Mental Health Board that we were dealing with, we were growing, we had a building and the staff, and that is when I got my administrative experience.

J: And did you learn on the job?

A: I learned things like budgeting on the job, and oh it was funny the way we started out, but we survived.

J: Not skills that you learned at Smith when you were getting your MSW.

A: No. Interestingly enough that clinic is still going strong.

J: Really. That must be satisfying.

A: It was 1958 when we started. And this year, it will be its fortieth anniversary. It has become very big and elaborate.

J: What is it called now?

A: It is still called Southeast Nassau Guidance Center and the man who replaced me is still there. I was there eight years and he has been there for thirty-two.

J: That is longevity. I am curious about the training you had with Sanford Sherman. What was the type of family therapy that you learned?

A: It was all Ackerman. It was sort of psychoanalysis pulled into the family. I don't know really what I learned. I just picked up family practice wherever I went. As I always tell my students, I was fortunate. I never went to one of the "mother houses" of family therapy so that I never had to become a loyal advocate of any one approach to family work. I kind of set foot in all of the family therapy schools and absorbed them all.

J: So what happened after this job? What led you to leave and where did you go after that?

A: When I took that job I was 32, and when I was approaching my fortieth birthday, I said to myself, "If you don't get out of here by the time you are forty you never will." It was so comfortable. It was so nice. I was having such a good time. I just figured I would retire out of it. Look what happened to the current director—he went

there and he is still there. So, I resigned on my fortieth birthday. And I went to Columbia to get my doctorate.

J: Did you have an idea of what your career plan would be at that time?

A: I always wanted to teach. That is what I was going to go do before I became a social worker—I was going to go teach philosophy.

J: So that never left you?

A: No. And I loved doing training. I loved students, and I did a lot of workshops.

J: So, here you were forty years old and you realized that you could have stayed indefinitely in this groove but you chose to go to Columbia. Looking back on it now, was that kind of like a mid-life shift in career?

A: Well, it is interesting. My mother did the same thing when she was forty. She went to Smith to get her Master's. I think that when I get comfortable and I think I am not growing, I put myself in a crisis situation by inducing a great deal of change.

J: Did you know that then or is this something you know now?

A: Well, I have seen myself do it. I have done it several times in my life. I did it when I was forty. I certainly did it when I was sixty and I took the job at Smith. I mean who wants to leave a full professorship at Michigan—it was crazy. I seem to celebrate birthdays that way. Now, Joan and I are committed to walking the Milford Track in New Zealand in February, another kind of challenge.

J: So, what made you decide to go to Columbia?

A: I wouldn't go to Smith, because I had my Master's from Smith. I was settled in the New York area. So, Columbia, being a top program, was just an obvious choice. I didn't have any

ambivalence about that at all. And I had worked with them over the years, having students from Columbia. So I went to Columbia in 1966 and Carel Germain was just a year ahead of me. And Larry Lister, who is at the University of Hawaii.

J: Is that where you met Carel?

A: Carel and I became good friends through the doctoral program. Even though she was a year ahead of me, she stayed on a year after she finished her course work as a "career teacher." (NIMH payed your salary and you learned how to be a teacher.) And then Larry and I did the same thing the next year. It was very nice because I could work on my dissertation.

J: What was your dissertation on?

A: It was entitled "Casework in Crisis." (See that—crisis intervention again.) From 1930 to 1941 was a major watershed period for social work. The functional/diagnostic split—the people that were writing and thinking and meeting and talking in that period were something else: Florence Hollis, Charlotte Towle, Gordon Hamilton, Jesse Taft, Virginia Robinson, Bertha Reynolds...

J: Did you meet any of them?

A: I knew Hollis quite well, and I met Reynolds. I saw Gordon Hamilton but I didn't really meet her. I saw her at Columbia only once because I got to Columbia after she retired. And Lucille Austin I knew. I had Hollis as a teacher in my doctoral program. I had Carol Meyer my first year and Hollis the second year and Ben Orcutt for the third course.

I took some fairly interesting courses at Columbia. I had Robert Merton for sociology, which was quite an experience. I had William Goode, one of the founders of family sociology. I had Sigmund Diamond, who is a social historian. He is a methodologist on doing social history. It was wonderful for the dissertation. I became very close friends with Carol Meyer during my doctoral period, which continued after I left.

The Columbia experience was interesting.

What I mainly learned from it, and I think this is always true with older students in an advanced degree program, was having the opportunity to read and to think and to dialogue with the other students. I mean those are the real sources of learning with the faculty sort of providing a space where that was possible. I learned most from Carel Germain through her introduction of an ecological perspective into social work.

J: Can you remember anything that you learned from her in particular?

A: Oh! [Laughter] She was a person that took me another step in thinking about the meaning of context. A giant step.

J: It must have been exciting for both of you.

A: Yes, we had a wonderful time together. We both did historical dissertations. She did from the founding of the National Conference to 1920. We had a gap of 10 years, and then I did the 30's. We had a contract to put it into a book, but we never did it. We had so much going on, both of us. When I finished Columbia I got a job teaching at Fordham. I was there for five years.

J: So, when you went to Fordham, what did you go to teach?

A: Practice. I had a wonderful time at Fordham. It was one of the nicest faculty groups. That was the best experience I ever had with a group of young faculty. A couple of my closest friends came out of that period at Fordham.

I had a good time. They made me the head of the beginning practice course to develop a generic practice sequence. They were beginning to push generic for the first year.

J: Was that the forerunner of generalist practice?

A: Yes. It was trying to put casework, groupwork, and CO together.

And then I went to Michigan. Joan and I were very eager to get out of New York. And we had been unable to because in her divorce agree-

ment she had to stay within 50 miles of her son's father who lived in New York. So, it was not possible to move. And suddenly her ex-husband moved to the West Coast. And the day he left for the West Coast was the day Phil Fellin called. My phone rang and he said "How would you like to come to Michigan?" I called up Joan and said, "How about Ann Arbor, Michigan?" She said, "Sure, let's go." We made our decision, like we usually do, in about ten minutes.

So I went out for interviews and when I came back, I was walking down the hall at Fordham and on the faculty bulletin board there was an ad for a teaching vacancy at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, which is five miles from Ann Arbor. So I took it off the bulletin board and brought it home and gave it to Joan. She called, made an appointment, and went out to Michigan, was interviewed at Eastern, and got the job on their faculty in their Bachelor's program. So we both went out with jobs starting in September 1974.

J: How has your professional relationship with Joan worked?

A: It has always been a partnership. But it has been like two for the see-saw. Although I was ahead of her in the early years because I had more experience, it shifted over time. When we went out to Michigan she began to do doctoral work at the University of Michigan in anthropology and social work, but with an emphasis on the anthropology. That was so enriching for both of us. She has continued to take a lot of leadership in our joint intellectual development. I was involved in administration and she got involved in ideas. I was running and doing, which is what I tend to do, and she was reading and thinking. So I am always running to keep up with her now.

The family book was published in 83. We worked on it for five years, 78 to 83. And we did the child welfare handbook concurrently, which was too much. And we got that out the next year. Each of them slowed down the other in a sense. But we did get them both out finally.

J: What were you and Joan trying to accomplish with *Family Centered Social Work Practice*?

A: We were trying to bring the ideas of practice that were going on in family therapy and make them available to social workers.

J: So from the beginning it sounds as if you were collaborating.

A: Joan and I also did a group, an adult group in Mineola at the Family Agency. That was the first time we actually did practice together and later at Ann Arbor Center for the Family we worked together, getting behind the mirror for each other. And we did family of origin groups together at Ann Arbor Center for the Family.

J: It was really fortuitous that you were both able to get teaching jobs at the same time.

A: It was very lucky. And she was at Eastern Michigan and I was at Michigan for twelve years. She took a two years' leave in the middle to do all her course work for her Ph.D.

J: So, you have told me a bit about all the things that you were doing when you were at Michigan. What was it like being on the faculty at Michigan?

A: Sheila Feld, the Associate Dean, called me up over the summer after they had hired me and asked me if I would chair practice. They were just moving from separate casework and groupwork and social treatment, and they were struggling. You know how faculty politics are—they didn't want to put anybody that was identified with one of those groups in charge of practice. So they called me up and said would I take it on, would I be in charge of practice. Well, Daniel walking into the lion's den. [Laughter] They don't fool around in Michigan. So, naive me, I came out and chaired practice. But we had a wonderful time.

I did it for five years. That was another one of my projects. We had seven hundred students and we developed a whole curriculum and it was so much fun. And I wrote an article about it called the "Systems Approach to Curriculum Development," or something like that.

J: Where was that published?

A: The *Journal of Education for Social Work*. First we developed the course called the 747, named after the big airplane. We developed this huge course the students took their whole first year that combined casework, groupwork, social treatment. But then the second year we were supposed to have concentrations. So I said to the faculty, "Anybody who wants to develop a concentration is free to do so. A concentration will consist of a policy course; one or two practice courses; and one or two human behavior (HB) courses and can be in any area." And the faculty was thrilled. It was a marvelous strategy for faculty development. They developed twelve or fifteen concentrations; it was apples and oranges.

J: So give me an example of one of the concentrations.

A: One was medical, one was child welfare, one was family, I think, and also, group work. One was behavioral—social behavioral practice—so it was even based on epistemology.

They put together a package and the students could sign up and that would be their package, their concentration, and of course they could add other stuff to support it. And it was the wildest looking curriculum you ever saw. Because some of the concentrations were by method, some were by population, like we had one on aging, and some were of fields of practice. It was marvelous and the students found their way through it.

J: So it absorbed everybody?

A: Everybody. Everybody got to do their thing.

J: And it sounds like everybody was on equal terms.

A: Absolutely. And they developed all these courses and course outlines and some of the faculty that had felt oppressed and unappreciated came forth with these courses and were able to do their thing and have it be appreciated and stu-

dents would sign up for it. Those were the ones that I was most pleased about. So that went on for about for five years, and it continued a little bit after that, but then of course, it had to be redone.

J: According to CSWE, or was it was just time to change it?

A: No, it was just that people who needed it to be tidier took over. They couldn't stand it that we had these concentrations that could be models, field of practice, epistemology, system size, population, etc.

J: Too many different categorical types?

A: Yes. They had to tidy it up. That's all right. I mean, I didn't need to be in control after I did it. I did it. I had a lot of fun. I think it was a wonderful faculty involvement strategy.

J: Right.

A: It resolved these conflicts of different models and approaches that had developed over the years and it gave everybody a chance to do their thing. Phil Fellin told me when I went there, and I will never forget this, he said "The University of Michigan is a market place of ideas." And I took that very seriously and used a market strategy. You develop your wares and you sell them and if the students buy, you are in business [Laughter].

J: So after you stepped down as Chair, what did you do within Michigan?

A: Well, then the Child Welfare Training Center was going and I taught.

J: Did you continue to teach practice courses?

A: Well, it is one of my things, like when I left my job and entered the doctoral program, I used to teach a new course every year. That is how I kept learning and growing. So I ended up teaching several different courses in Human Be-

havior in the Social Environment (HBSE), social policy, and practice on several levels. So, I have taught a lot of different things.

J: It sounds like you taught everything except research.

A: I never taught research, but I was on a lot of dissertation committees in different university departments and, of course, in social work.

J: And so, you were doing this and it sounds like your writing activity increased.

A: Yes.

J: And you were working in the Family Center and working in the Child Welfare Training Center, and you were a parent.

A: Well, Joan and I never saw each other because we both worked at Ann Arbor Center for the Family and one of us had to be home in the evening. She worked two nights a week and I worked two nights a week. We were both home on Friday and we both worked on Saturday morning.

J: How old was your son, Duncan, when you moved to Michigan?

A: He was ten when we moved to Michigan.

J: Did you really enjoy this level of activity? For some people this would have been a killer.

A: That's the way I am, hyperactive, I guess.

J: No, just active. Take out the hyper.

A: Well, I tell you both my parents were the same way. Very active people.

J: I guess one of the tracks I wanted to explore before we get to Smith is what led you to start writing and how did that separate career evolve?

A: Well, it is funny. I always was interested

in writing. When I was at Community Service Society (CSS), I wrote my first article, I think two years out of school: "The Use of the Worker's Vacation in Casework Treatment." And it was published in *Social Casework*.

J: That is an interesting topic.

A: And it has been widely used. It is very funny because there was so little on termination and it was really about termination in a sense. And then I began to write for *True Love* magazine.

J: No?

A: I wrote an advice column for *True Love* magazine. I wrote an article on "Do you need help?" for teenagers. If you feel upset, how to get help.

J: For *True Love* magazine?

A: For *True Love* magazine. And then they liked it so much, they asked me to do an advice column. So I did that for quite a while.

Also, my two papers for casework my first year at Columbia were published. One of them was "Anomie in Social Casework." That was my paper for Carol Meyer's class. And my paper for Florence Hollis' class was "To think about the unthinkable" on systems theory. They were both published in *Casework* the next year. So, clearly, I started thinking about writing and publishing right away.

J: You were publishing before you came to Columbia and then while you were there, taking class papers and turning them into articles. Do you feel that writing came easily to you?

A: You get better the more you do it. I always write by hand.

J: Still?

A: Still. I am trying to learn to write on the computer, but I really sketch it out by hand before I put it in the computer.

J: It is almost like it is in a different part of the brain.

A: It is. I have always done a fair amount of writing, even when I was at Smith, but then the other huge job in my life was being editor of *Social Work*. And that curtailed my writing to a certain extent, except for doing the editorials.

J: Well, that is when you told me that you had switched from writing articles to essays.

A: Writing those essays was a wonderful experience.

J: So when you and Joan collaborate together on a writing project, how do you approach it?

A: When we were doing the family book, each had certain chapters. There are some chapters I write the draft of and some that she drafts. And then we switch them.

J: And has that flowed easily?

A: Joan is a wonderful writer. She is a much longer writer and I am a much shorter writer. I tend to be very clear, organized, rather brief and to the point, and not very artistic. And she is a very artistic writer, a very creative writer.

J: Sounds like in some ways that's a good balance.

A: It is a good balance. She flowers me up and I trim her down.

J: It sounds like an ideal combination.

A: It is. She uses wonderful language and wonderful metaphors, and I do the outline.

J: Is there a difference for you when you are writing with someone as opposed to writing on your own?

A: I haven't really written with other people that much, except Joan and one piece with Carel Germain. I like to work collaboratively, but in

terms of writing, I think I prefer to do my own thing.

J: Are there any people you haven't mentioned that were particular influences on you during this stage of your career?

A: I think not in a mentorship position. I became the mentor in a sense by then. But of enormous influence on me have been my clients. I would say Joan and my clients have been the greatest influence since I left Columbia. And Caryl Germain was the other one, probably in my whole intellectual life, I would say.

J: At one time you became very involved in the family therapy movement, also in the feminist wing within that movement. Do you want to talk briefly about what that was like and who were some of the people you had contact with?

A: I went to workshops everywhere and that is how I learned. I just kept going to different workshops, and I had everybody at one time or another. One stands out particularly, when we went out to Toronto and spent three days with Mara Selvini-Palizzoli. And we brought people out to the Ann Arbor Center for the Family to spend time with us. Lynn Hoffman, Peggy Papp, David Reiss, the Framos—I got to know them. That was in my earlier days. I was a charter member of AFTA (American Family Therapy Academy). When I first went to AFTA, I felt pretty out of it. I was a social worker and a social work educator and although we had Ann Arbor Center for the Family, in the early years AFTA was not exactly a welcoming organization. It was very hierarchical and all the gurus were still alive and running it. And I was very far from the gurus.

J: And they were mostly male?

A: All males. Really all male, or just about. And then Monica McGoldrick and Carol Anderson and Froma Walsh organized a conference for women in leadership positions in family therapy at Stonehenge in Connecticut and they invited Joan and me. I guess there were about 45 there and we spent three days together. We met Peggy

Papp, Marianne Walters, Betty Carter. I mean, everybody was there. I think the only leading family therapist that wasn't there was Lynn Hoffman. We spent three days together and like women do (you know, this is the way women organize), we developed relationships. We met again two years later with a slightly expanded group. A tremendous amount of publishing came out of that and a whole new structure, a friendship structure and a political structure, that began to be very influential at AFTA. Carol Anderson was elected president and Froma Walsh was elected president after that.

J: You feel this, in a sense, was an epistemology that was challenging the existing paradigm?

A: Well, it was certainly challenging the very hierarchical and Parsonian vision of the family. And, of course, then McGoldrick, Walsh, and Anderson published *Women and Families in Family Therapy*. Most of the people in that book were people at that conference. It was very exciting.

J: When was that?

A: 84 or 85. That has been a wonderful social network, that group of women. When I think about the family theorists, Murray Bowen, whom I have seen several times, was very influential for me although mainly through his writing. And now, Michael White, whom I adore. Every time I can, I attend his workshops and seminars.

J: What do you adore about him?

A: I became, via Joan, very interested in social constructionism and he, I think, has done the best work of translating that into practice. But, mostly, I love the kind of person he is. He is a remarkable person. He is so modest and he practices what he preaches all the time. He is always reaching for positives. He is always connecting with people. He is always crediting others. As an example, I was in a big workshop of his in Boston, this last year. There were 300 people in the room. He gets up and he starts talking about me and what I meant to him when he was a young social work student reading my stuff and how

important it was now that we had become friends. And he said, "And I miss Joan. She is not here today because she has pneumonia and I am worried about her."

J: He sounds like a very gracious person.

A: Well, it is more than graciousness. It is connecting with other people in a way that is locating himself and being transparent. It is doing all the things that he talks about doing. He does them in his life.

J: And he also learns a lot from his clients as you say you have, too.

A: Absolutely, and I've learned so much from him. But, I think probably most of all, I like his political position. And I've been doing a lot of thinking and writing about that.

J: Can you summarize what it is about his political position?

A: Well, he really deals with the power issues in therapy, really faces what that is about. I did an editorial about that some time ago. He is a 60's-early 70's radical. He just practices what he preaches about his ideas. There is not an ounce of him that is guru or authoritarian or hierarchical; he is just there with you. He corresponds with everybody. I don't know how he keeps it up.

J: He sounds like a very special person.

A: He is a very special person. Everybody who knows him, I think, feels that way about him.

J: When did you get into social constructionism?

A: Well, it has been coming right along. It came right out of Joan's work in anthropology.

J: She imported that?

A: Absolutely. And my thing about context was so congruent with that. I majored in philosophy in college. I studied Whitehead for a whole

semester and I studied Kant, so this is not new. These ideas are not new; they are reformulated. I remember one of the first things I wrote was an article on diagnosis or on assessment or something, and I said, "We have always said that we start where the client is, but that's not true, we start where the worker is." Which is a social constructionist idea long before I ever heard of social constructionism, but I was always asking those kind of questions, so it just felt so comfortable. And I think my background in philosophy had a lot to do with my comfort with it.

J: So actually it must have felt very validating and familiar when this became popular.

A: I've always been worried about politics. I've always been worried about issues of power. I've always been uncomfortable with the power relationship with clients.

J: Where do you think that came from?

A: I don't know. I always talked about collaborative and egalitarian relationships. I am not saying that I preceded all this, but I have always had a bent in that direction.

J: So it sounds like this was more affirming rather than a change in direction.

A: No, it was a change, too, because it was just so much more sophisticated than my thoughts were. It is just that it felt comfortable with my values and gave them a framework.

J: It sounds like in a sense you had instincts in that direction and this became a more coherent framework.

A: I have always been rather radical politically. Of course, social constructionism doesn't have to be a radical position. It can be a conservative position. It depends on how much attention you pay to Foucault. But, I would never be a constructionist without Foucault because he brought in the issues of power and the political nature of knowledge.

J: He has been a major influence, hasn't he?

A: Yes, and a lot of it being via Michael White, who treats clients with such respect. When I was in Michigan, I was either writing, seeing clients, teaching, or working with students. We had some nice friends, but the people I spent the most time with on an intimate level were my clients. In fact, everybody said when I was moving to Northampton: "Ann, if you are not going to have any clients you are going to have to develop some friends."

I learned so much and got so much from my clients. And now Michael says, "You should give it back." And I've been thinking of writing them and telling them all I've learned from them.

J: That would be a neat thing to do.

A: Well, with a couple of them I might do it.

J: I did a similar thing like that; it's a very special thing to do.

A: Yes, I have a painting downstairs that one of my clients, an artist, gave me when I left Michigan, and I'd like to write her and tell her that I just never walk by that without enjoying it.

J: I hope you do it. It could mean a lot to that person to hear that and to you.

A: Maybe I will do it. And I think about her. She was Scottish and her father came over from Scotland, and I was doing family-of-origin work with her and her father came in, this elderly Scottish man in his little cap. I will never forget that interview with him and how much that meant to me and how much I learned. What a lovely man with such inner dignity. And the way he participated in that session to help his daughter and shared things about himself, which is so contrary to his culture, and yet his caring enabled him to do it. I'll never forget that session. And then he went back to Scotland and did some family-of-origin work himself! I just loved seeing clients. It is the one thing I miss.

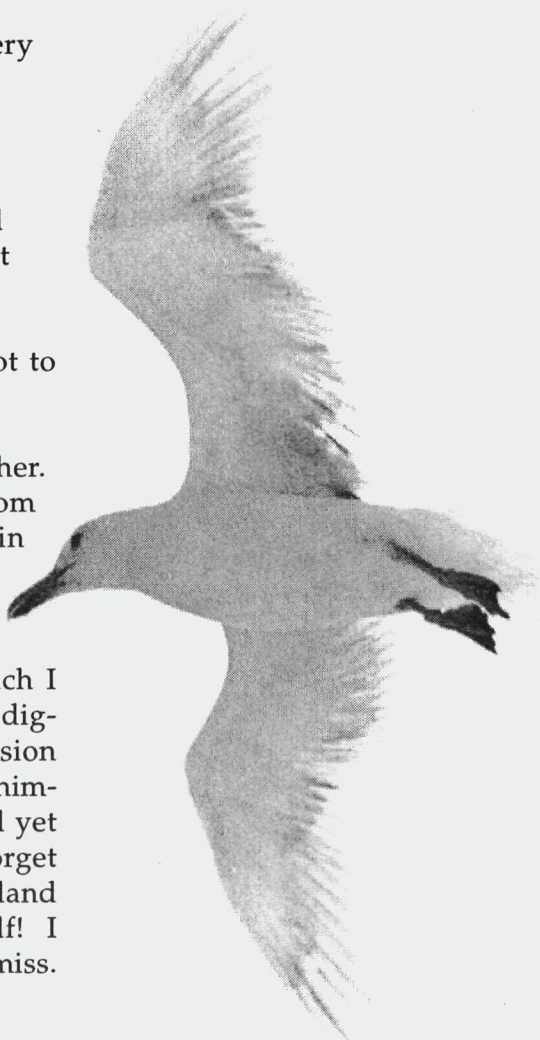
J: Do you think you might do that again?

A: I don't think so. I don't want the responsibility. Joan and I did volunteer last year and ran a family reflecting team in Greenfield. We did it all year and it was lots of fun. And I suppose that if I could find some place I could volunteer to see families, I would do it.

J: Well, it is nice to have such fond recollections of your clients.

A: Of course, my mother went back into practice in her mid 70s. □

To be continued...



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