

HISTORY

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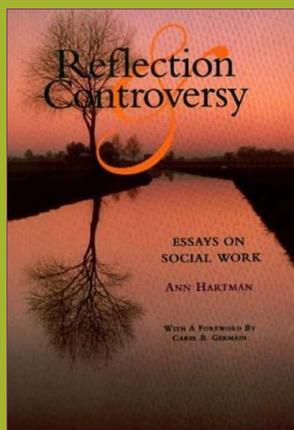
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FAMILY-CENTERED SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Ann Hartman
Joan Laird



1978 Ann Hartman

Family therapy, ecomaps and genograms



It is probably a safe hypothesis to say that not many social workers across the world know the name of Ann Hartman and the way she contributed to social work practice, although most know her contributions.

Hartman started her career in 1959 as a caseworker for the Summit County Child Welfare Board in Akron, Ohio. After receiving her master of social work, she moved on to work in mental health and family services in the New York area. From 1974 onwards, once she completed her PhD, she started working as a social work researcher and educator at the University of Michigan faculty in 1974. She again became involved with family social work through the Ann Arbor Center for the Family and the National Child Welfare Training Center. In 1986, she moved on to the [School of Social Work at the Smith College in Massachusetts](#).

Hartman made two related contributions to social work that still influence today's practice. Both were already embedded in her first influential publication, an article that appeared in 1978 in *Social Casework* (later renamed to *Families in society*) entitled [Diagrammatic assessment of family relationships](#).

Her first contribution to social work was the introduction of the ecomap (often also called an ecogram) and the genogram as simple drawing techniques that enable social workers to depict social and family relationships. Both can be used for assessment, planning and intervention. It can be used by the social worker only, or as an aid in an interview with clients. Hartman stresses the visual power of the tool: "The connections, the themes, and the quality of the family's life seem to jump off the page and this leads to a more holistic and integrative perception."

This line of work was later expanded by e.g. Monica McGoldrick on using genograms to visualise intergenerational family relationships and Mark Mattaini on using graphics for clinical practice.

The second major contribution Hartman made to social work can be labelled ecological social work and follows from the ecomap and genogram. The focus of clinical practice should not solely be on the client but include his or her social network. One goal for the social worker is to engage with that social network and unleash what it can contribute in terms of caring and support. In that way, one could grow beyond the traditional approach of interventions being oriented on individuals. Given the demographic changes of the last decades, it should not be a surprise that Ann Hartman's original focus on family relations has been expanded to other social relations. Family has become less important in many people's lives.

This approach could be described as the middle ground between individual social work and political social work. It can be found in family social work, but also in recent social policy developments in e.g. the UK and the Netherlands where heavy budget cuts on social workers are linked to a heavier reliance on care generated by family and other persons in the social networks of clients.

Extra

Although paper and pencil suffice to draw an ecogram and genogram, these days software is often used. There are several packages a social worker could use, such as that of [Wonderware](#), [Genogram Maker](#) or [Genopro](#).

Additional information

- Hartman, A. (1978), [Diagrammatic assessment of family relationships](#), *Social Casework*, 59(8), 465-476.
- Hartman, A. (1986), [Families in theory and practice](#)
- Hartman, A., & Laird, J. (1983), *Family-centered social work*, New York: Free press.

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The history of social work project is foremost a website.

This website is continuously being updated and expanded. Please make sure you visit us for the latest version of the information in this file.



This initiative also exists in Dutch, where it covers the history of social work in the Netherlands, in Flanders, and internationally.

See www.canonsociaalwerk.eu

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More Than a
Thousand Words:
Graphics for
Clinical Practice

Mark A. Mattaini



- Hartman, A. (1994), *Reflection & controversy: essays on social work*, Washington: NASW press. A collection of editorials Ann Hartman wrote for the NASW-journal *Social Work*.

Links

- [Mark Mattaini's website at Jane Addams college of social work](#)



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