topics such as sex differences in women's mental health problems and their causes, sexist treatment in the mental health system, diagnoses applied to women, women and their physicians, innovative mental health treatment alternatives for women, and prevention of mental health problems for women in the workplace.

Jean Baker Miller's article sums up the philosophy of the authors of this book. She points out that the mental health professional must reevaluate and undo what he or she formerly accepted as "knowledge." He or she must be open to the new findings about the mental health of women which are emerging. Like the authors of the CMHA report, Miller comments on the changing structure of the family, and the "feminization of poverty." Placed in a situation with limited choices, many women develop feelings of helplessness. This can have a detrimental effect on both their physical and mental health. It limits their ability to build upon or recognize their own resources. Miller argues that rather than blaming the victim, we must examine societal forces affecting womens' mental health. Prevention thus becomes the focus.

Women over the last ten to fifteen years have critiqued the health and mental health fields and created alternatives such as rape crisis centers, shelters for battered women, post-partum help and childbirth programmes. Miller recommends the continued development of an alliance of women consumers and women mental health workers in providing a force to change the mental health system. I would add that it is not only women who are victimized by the mental health system. If dissatisfied consumers and mental health care workers, regardless of sex, worked together to change some of the problems of the mental health care system, they would have even stronger forces than women alone.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL WORK AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

Edited by Mary Valentich and James Gripton. *Journal of Social Work and Human Sexuality* (Vol. 3, Numbers 2/3). New York: The Haworth Press, 1985.
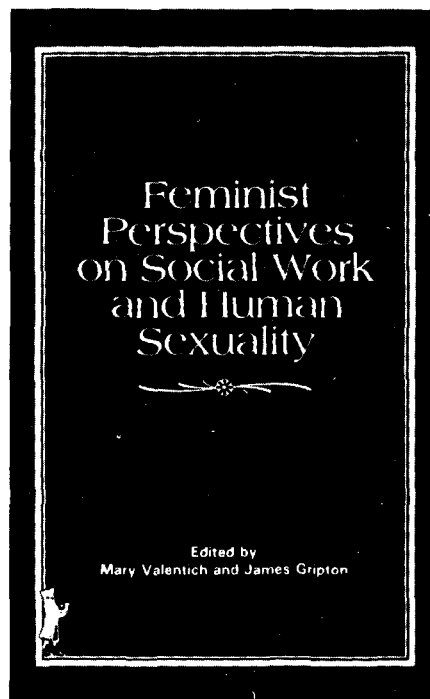
Elspeth Heyworth

Since the major focus of the women's movement is on the oppression of women, with its principal goal being that of equality; and since social work — itself a predominantly female profession — works primarily with women disadvantaged both by gender and socio-economic status, it is surprising that there has been no clear alliance between the two groups.

Valentich and Gripton's collection of articles is an extremely tentative move towards a shared philosophy. It emphasizes the range of perspectives within feminism and selects the safe option of a "liberal feminist" position — perhaps not surprisingly since it claims that the social work profession generally operates within the existing social and political order. It does allow that this emphasis "does not preclude social action to achieve equality of women and men." But this very lack of affirmation confirms the predominating theme that social workers (frequently equated with therapists in this text) should remain neutral. And neutrality assumes that you don't take a position on potentially divisive issues. For those of us who believe that professionalism has never meant not taking a stand, this book is frequently disappointing.

Certainly there are useful articles, particularly those which emphasize the need to accept a diversity of views on what constitutes a family, or on matters of sexual preference. There are also attempts to differentiate between traditional concepts (e.g. a psychodynamic or even an integrational approach) and an approach which also relates difficulties in human sexuality to gender. The article on family therapy confronts the neutral stance of systems theory which can permit sexist values to go unchallenged: MacKinnon and Miller use an example of inadequate sexual relationships being explained away by a wife's unresolved loyalty to her family of origins and therefore her inability to fully commit herself to her husband. Another pinpoints the frequent failure of therapists to see distancing itself as a primary issue between a couple, rather than the nature of the sexual relationship. Despite data showing that women seek more emotional involvement than men the problem is frequently viewed as incompatibility rather than as a gender issue.

With some exceptions, such as the

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examples quoted above, which make the dilemmas real and bring them to life, this text is mechanical and academic and thus loses the opportunity to search for principles or philosophies or to explore new concepts. In its anxiety to be academic and carefully footnoted it becomes more of a literature review than a penetrating discussion of difficult and complex issues. It only infrequently ventures beyond the clinical treatment area of social work (indeed the "treatment" label is not examined for the assumption that the term implies — that all those who seek help from social workers or therapists are "sick") into other arenas of support groups, self-help, prevention, community. And its statistical and sampling base is sometimes shaky. When conclusions on what constitutes passion are based solely on an academic audience for a database, or when "a range" of psychological problems most likely to require therapeutic attentions for women who were sexually abused in childhood was based on a sample of 22, it is hard to imagine why formal research methods were not jettisoned in favour of a messier but more challenging groping towards new truths.

The major difficulty with this uneven text is its lack of clarity about its base. Diversity, variation, a recognition of freedom of choice is fine, despite frustratingly brief and specific articles. But what is missing is a stronger introduction or conclusion which pulls together issues, which recognizes alternative concepts, values and methods. If feminism is to be linked to social work the very least that might be expected by an eager reader is a consistent awareness of both social context and gender. At best, those of us in practice look for research which will substantiate an enlarged understanding, a clearer vision, a connectedness of thought.