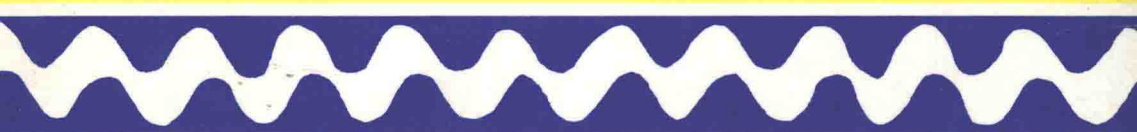




WOMEN AND POWER

Perspectives for Family Therapy



Edited by
THELMA JEAN GOODRICH



WOMEN AND POWER

Perspectives for Family Therapy

E d i t e d b y

Thelma Jean Goodrich

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***To Mary,
old acquaintance***

POWER

Living in the earth-deposits of our history

Today a backhoe divulged out of a crumbling flank of earth
one bottle amber perfect a hundred-year-old
cure for fever or melancholy a tonic
for living on this earth in the winters of this climate

Today I was reading about Marie Curie:
she must have known she suffered from radiation sickness
her body bombarded for years by the element
she had purified

It seems she denied to the end
the source of the cataracts on her eyes
the cracked and suppurating skin of her finger-ends
till she could no longer hold a test-tube or a pencil

She died a famous woman denying
her wounds
denying
her wounds came from the same source as her power

1974

Adrienne Rich—

The Dream of a Common Language

THE LIONESS

The scent of her beauty draws me to her place.
The desert stretches, edge from edge.
Rock. Silver grasses. Drinking-hole.
The starry sky.
The lioness pauses
in her back-and-forth pacing of three yards square
and looks at me. Her eyes
are truthful. They mirror rivers,
seacoasts, volcanoes, the warmth
of moon-bathed promontories.
Under her haunches' golden hide
flows an innate, half-abnegated power.
Her walk
is bounded. Three square yards
encompass where she goes.

*In country like this, I say, the problem is always
one of straying too far, not of staying
within bounds. There are caves,
high rocks, you don't explore. Yet you know
they exist. Her proud, vulnerable head
sniffs toward them. It is her country, she
knows they exist.*

I come towards her in the starlight.
I look into her eyes
as one who loves can look,
entering the space behind her eyeballs,
leaving myself outside.
So, at last, through her pupils,

I see what she is seeing:
between her and the river's flood,
the volcano veiled in rainbow,
a pen that measures three yards square.
Lashed bars.
The cage.
The penance.

1975

Adrienne Rich—

The Dream of a Common Language

Preface

WOMEN AND POWER COMPRISE a worrisome subject—unsettling to discuss and complicated to analyze. For family therapists, it has become an unavoidable subject, raised for us more and more frequently by our clients or our culture, if not by our theory. In hopes of moving it from worrisome to workable, I have called on some of the foremost thinkers and clinicians in our field to write of their efforts to understand and change women's position in the power structure of the family. To that end, the first three sections of the book address the shape, meaning, and impact of power in patriarchy and in the family under patriarchy. The shape, meaning, and impact are different for men and women, and these differences are sharply drawn for us. The fourth section presents issues and approaches for our clinical work. The fifth section contains brief presentations by 14 therapists concerning women and power in their own clinical practice. Some describe ideas that puzzle or challenge; some describe a case; some describe a method.

Women's position in the power structure of the society limits our success as therapists. These limitations are readily apparent and readily acknowledged in all the chapters. Still, there is always the "nevertheless": We must do the work, even so. The limitations give us no excuse. As Jimmy Durante put it, "Them's the conditions that prevail."

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I

THE SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTEXT

THELMA JEAN GOODRICH

Women, Power, and Family Therapy: What's Wrong With This Picture?

IS POWER WHAT WOMEN WANT? This is not an innocent question, for it reflects back on the context that produces it, highlighting features ordinarily unmentionable in polite conversation. Talk in mixed company and in public speech always describes a free society, open access, and abundant resources for any hard worker. Then this embarrassing question intrudes, which exposes a hierarchical ordering of the sexes with men in the dominant position, women in the subordinate. The question not only embarrasses, it requires consideration of possible yearnings among subordinates for power and thus engenders fear and consternation for men, fear and confusion for women.

WOMEN'S REACTION TO POWER

Boys pride themselves on their drab clothing, their drooping socks, their smeared and inky skin; dirt, for them, is almost as good as wounds. They work at acting like boys. They call each other by their last names, draw attention to any extra departures from cleanliness. "Hey, Robertson! Wipe off the snot!" "Who farted?" They punch one another on the arm, saying, "Got you!" "Got you back!" There always seem to be more of them in the room than there actually are.

—Margaret Atwood, *Cat's Eye*