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ABSTRACT

This essay examines the ways in which psychology, as a discipline, has been influenced by feminist scholarship in the field. Noting that feminist psychologists have challenged the assumption that psychological science is value-free, it cites ways in which values have affected psychological theory and method. The view that men's behavior is normative underlies the historic marginalization of research on women in psychology. The best example of androcentrism and devaluation of women is found in Freudian theory, which defines being female as both different and deficient. Many "gender effects" on behavior can be accounted for by power differences between women and men; feminist psychologists have pointed to the usefulness of descriptive research that does not seek to generalize about all human behavior. An appendix includes eight principles of feminist curriculum development that focus on diversity, egalitarianism and empowerment, self-determination, complexity, connection, social action, self-reflection, and integrative perspectives. A 129-item bibliography contains information on cognitive psychology; developmental psychology; social psychology: physical health and reproduction; mental health; women in the history of psychology; research methodologies and publication issues; gender and other forms of diversity; feminist theory; scientific theory; curriculum transformation resources; pedagogy; electronic resources; and organizational resources. (MDM)

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# PSYCHOLOGY

*Discipline Analysis*

*Margaret E. Madden*
*Lawrence University*
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WOMEN in the CURRICULUM

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# PREFACE

Since the 1970s feminist and multicultural scholarship has been challenging the traditional content, organization, methodologies, and epistemologies of the academic disciplines. By now this scholarship is formidable in both quantity and quality and in its engagement of complex issues. The National Center for Curriculum Transformation Resources on Women is therefore publishing a series of essays that provide brief, succinct overviews of the new scholarship. Outstanding scholars in the disciplines generously agreed to write the essays, which are intended to help faculty who want to revise courses in light of the new information and perspectives. Each essay is accompanied by a bibliography that includes references for further reading, resources for the classroom, and electronic resources.

Elaine Hedges

Series Editor

# PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is a science and a profession, which means that the feminist challenge to the field has involved critique of both the generation and the application of psychological knowledge. From the very beginning of psychology's more than 100-year history in the United States, feminist psychologists have sought to use their knowledge and skills to challenge sexism in psychology and society, empower women, connect social and political contexts to psychological dynamics, and develop a knowledge base relevant to women's lives. This rich tradition has been reclaimed by late twentieth century feminist psychologists (O'Connell & Russo, 1983, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991; Russo & Denmark, 1987; Scarborough, 1988; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). Today, hardly a theory, method, or area of application escapes feminist analysis (see O'Connell & Russo, 1991, for feminist critiques of psychology's subfields). In addition to critiquing omissions in and inappropriate applications of psychological knowledge and method, feminist psychologists are transforming the field by identifying new issues, alternative perspectives, and new audiences for research (Mednick, 1991; Worell & Etaugh, 1994; Worell & Johnson, 1997). In this brief essay, we summarize some basic elements of the feminist challenge to psychology's ways of constructing knowledge, and identify resources for continuing the transformation of the field.

# Assumptions and Paradigms

Psychology is a science, and in the hands of feminist psychologists, the scientific method has been a powerful tool to debunk cultural stereotypes about women (Hyde, 1994; Lott, 1991; Russo & Dabul, 1994). At the same time, however, the assumptions and paradigms of science have been scrutinized. Feminists have challenged psychology to recognize the impact of values on the psychological enterprise, become more holistic and contextual in perspective, and develop theoretical models of behavior that conceptualize women's behavior as reflecting biological, psychological, and social factors in dynamic interaction.

Feminist psychologists have challenged the assumption that psychological science is value-free, documenting the influence of values at every phase of psychology's scientific enterprise, including who gets to be trained and hired, whose theoretical frameworks are accepted, who defines legitimacy for research questions, what questions are asked, what methodologies are deemed "scientific" and appropriate for constructing knowledge, how results are analyzed, interpreted, and reported, and who receives credit for a piece of work (McHugh, Koeske, & Frieze, 1986; Denmark, Russo, Frieze, & Sechzer, 1988; Russo, 1990; Sherif, 1979). Unfortunately, psychology has a history of having its research findings used to justify discrimination against women (O'Connell & Russo, 1991; Shields, 1975).

Values and expectations have powerful effects on the outcomes of experiments, and feminist psychologists have provided clear descriptions of how gender-related expectations affect scientific endeavor (Wittig, 1985; Lott, 1991). Such research provides empirical support for the position that who is permitted to do science affects theories and questions generated in the field (Rosser, 1990;

Schiebinger, 1993). In fact, feminist psychologists have empirically shown that the gender of authors is correlated with whether findings support or refute gender stereotypes (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 1981; Lott, 1991). The point is not that male psychologists are particularly biased against women, but that all people bring their values and expectations to research questions, designs, and interpretations. Those who maintain their research is value-free are more dangerous and naive than those who explicate the values embedded in their research.

There are numerous examples of ways in which values have affected psychological theory and method, but perhaps the most telling evidence of the impact of values on the research process is the historical neglect and marginalization of research on women and gender (Worell & Etaugh, 1994). The extensive literature generated on women and gender issues in the last three decades is a tribute to a feminist transformation in the field, if measured by sheer quantity of effort. In a search of Dissertation Abstracts, we found 9000 titles related to psychology and gender or psychology and women. These included 708 in the 1970s and before. In contrast, there were 4900 such articles in the 1980s, and 3614 in the first half of the 1990s —a steady increase. A count on the PsychLit database of psychology publications provided more evidence for burgeoning of the field. At the beginning of the database in 1974 and 1979, there were only 535 articles mentioning gender, and 4815 mentioning women or gender. Between 1990 and March 1995, there were 7410 articles mentioning gender, 17,256 articles mentioning gender or women, and 748 articles mentioning feminism.

Not all of this research would be considered feminist, but these figures demonstrate that women and gender have become legitimate and popular topics for research.

Today, neglected areas of research such as menstruation and menopause, contraception and abortion, rape, battering, sexual harassment and coercion, ethnic women's issues, lesbian issues, and women's friendships and careers—and more—are considered timely and important.

Feminists do more than challenge the assumption that research is value free, however—they view research in the service of feminist values as a positive good (Mednick, 1991). As Russo and Dabul (1994) have noted, promoting human welfare has been a goal of psychology throughout its history, a principle that extends to promoting equity and fairness, and empowering women. Feminist psychologists engage in diverse activities to empower women through the acquisition of knowledge, help individuals and groups of people, and influence political structures (Katz, 1991; Lott, 1991; Travis, Gressley, & Crumpler, 1991). They have been leaders in the preparation of scholarship empowering to women in the form of important APA research task forces on issues such as bias in research (Denmark, et al., 1988), women's depression (McGrath, Keita, Strickland, & Russo, 1990), psychological consequences of abortion (Adler et al., 1990), and male violence against women (Koss, Goodman, Browne, Fitzgerald, Keita, & Russo, 1994). In addition, feminist researchers have been instrumental in providing amicus briefs and expert testimony in court cases dealing with issues important to gender equity, such as sexual harassment and abortion.

It is important to recognize, however, that employment opportunities have been constrained by discrimination against women and feminist ideas. Employment opportunities in which feminist scholarship, practice, and action is valued have been limited, and even in the 1990s some career avenues are not yet fully open to women. Thus, protection, recognition, and reward for feminist activities continue to be primary concerns of organizations

such as the Association for Women in Psychology (Tiefer, 1991), the Division on the Psychology of Women (Division 35) of the American Psychological Association (APA) (Mednick & Urbanski, 1991), and the APA Committee on Women in Psychology (Hogan & Sexton, 1991). Success is found in the fact that in 1996 Division 35 became the fourth largest division in the American Psychological Association, with 4814 members.

A view that men's behavior is normative underlies the historical marginalization of research on women in psychology as well as in other disciplines. If women and men behave differently, women's behavior has been assumed to be aberrant or deficient (Crawford & Marecek, 1989; Jacklin & McBride-Chang, 1991; Shields, 1975). In particular, male gender role expectations of agency and autonomy have been defined as indicating maturity and adjustment, while women's gender role expectations for connectedness and responsibility for others have been construed as indicating dependency and immaturity. This devaluation of women's experiences is reflected in denigrating individuals and their problems and defining experiences more typical of women as unimportant for study (Caplan, 1989; Jones, 1991; Reid, 1993; Sherif, 1982).

Perhaps the most influential example of androcentrism and devaluation of women in psychological theory is found in Freudian theory, which defines being female as both different and deficient, and is still used to promote adjustment to a sexist status quo. Despite a long history of feminist critiques of Freudian notions (Horney, 1935; Russo & O'Connell, 1992), those criticisms began to appear in undergraduate textbooks only after modern feminists identified them and forcefully articulated sociocultural and historical biases in Freud's view of women and men (Weisstein, 1971; Lerman, 1986). Although less widely disseminated compared to the critique of Freud, feminist critiques

of other prominent theories in the field have lead to modifications and qualifications, including critiques of sociobiology (Weisstein, 1982), social learning theory (Block, 1978; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), cognitive psychology (Bem, 1981, 1993; Gilligan, 1982), and psychological testing (Lewin & Wild, 1991).

More recently, psychologists have recognized that male normative models of coping with negative events ignored many ways people who lack political or financial power actively cope with their situations. Viewing women and other powerless people as active agents is important to feminist psychology (Chin & Russo, 1997). Historically, psychology often reinforced the status quo and stereotypes of women as passive and unable to control their lives. For instance, research on domestic violence influenced by Freudian theory has sometimes focused on the apparently dysfunctional coping represented by women staying with battering partners, interpreting it as female masochism. The many ways in which women were maneuvering within the relationship to protect themselves or their children and orchestrating a break were not acknowledged. Furthermore, feminist writers have pointed out for years that leaving the residence of a batterer frequently does not stop the battering, and may even put women in greater danger of physical harm or of losing her children (Walker, 1980). Without acknowledging these compelling situational constraints, theories that interpret ending the relationship as the only form of adequate adjustment are unrealistic and inappropriate. Health psychology has been greatly influenced by feminist notions emphasizing behavioral prevention, perceptions of control, social support, and other concepts (Travis, Gressley, & Crumpler, 1991).

In urging a more holistic perspective for the field, feminist psychologists have questioned the reductionist assumption that the smallest unit of analysis is most useful.

Because scientific reductionism drives scientists towards simple, and often simplistic, explanations of complex phenomena, psychologists have often ignored the context in which behaviors occur. Reductionism also promotes the notion that the purest explanation of human behavior is a biological explanation, ignoring other levels of analysis (e.g., psychological, sociological) which can and should be employed to understand human experience. Feminist psychologists have joined with other social, gestalt, humanist, and phenomenological psychologists in questioning the validity of reductionist assumptions for causal explanations (Bem, 1993; Bleier, 1986; Keller, 1985; Lott, 1991; Reinharz, 1992; Rosser, 1992; Sherif, 1982).

In examining effects of context, feminist psychologists have shown that many "gender effects" on behavior can be accounted for by power differences between women and men (Eagly, 1987; Snodgrass, 1985; Geis, 1993), and they have extended that analysis to power, status, and economic differences in experiences of members of under-represented groups, including people who are poor, disabled, homosexual, or members of ethnic minority groups (Amaro & Russo, 1987; Coleman, 1988; Fine & Asch, 1988; Melville, 1980; Reid, 1993; Task Force on Representation in the Curriculum, 1995). Other feminists have focused on social roles and expectations in the wider cultural context. For example, Alice Eagly (1987) has proposed that gender differences in family and occupational roles result in differences in gender role expectations, including those that women be nurturant and emotionally supportive.

Feminist women of color have been strong and articulate voices in emphasizing the importance of context, challenging the idea that there is a "generalized and shared experience of womanhood" (Lott, 1991, p. 509). They have challenged feminist psychology to recognize that gender is a dynamic construct that varies depending on

ethnicity (Amaro & Russo, 1987; Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990; Landrine, 1995). They have pointed out that feminist analyses that ignore class and emphasize sexism as women's primary oppression do not mesh with their experience of reality (Comas-Dias, 1991). They have reminded feminist psychology that behaviors of ethnic minorities have also been viewed as different and deficient, and even in feminist psychology there has been a tendency for ethnic minority women's behaviors to be judged by norms of white women (Reid, 1994). They have pointed out that emphasizing independence and individualism may conflict with some women's cultural perspectives, and have objected to the failure of some feminists to recognize that feminist techniques, such as consciousness-raising and personal disclosure, can be culturally insensitive. Most of all, they have insisted that their dual commitment to gender and race/ethnicity be respected (Barrett, 1990; Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990).

Psychology has emphasized the importance of language and its effect on what we notice, think, and remember. Psychological research demonstrating that language which infantalizes or disregards women underscores the power of language (Hyde, 1984; Lakoff, 1973; Moulton, Robinson, & Elias, 1978). Such research was used to argue for developing guidelines for avoiding sexist language and were institutionalized in APA's *Publication Manual* (APA, 1994). These guidelines were a result of coordinated prodding by APA's Committee on Women in Psychology and Division 35, and today influence the way that knowledge is constructed and expressed in all major journals in psychology. Arguably, this is one of feminist psychology's most influential successes, for the *Publication Manual* is used as the standard for many academic disciplines beyond psychology, such as business management.

Feminist psychologists have urged reconceptualization of differences between women and men. Today, a major debate within feminist psychology is how to conceptualize and interpret differences in behavior between women and men (Mednick, 1991; Eagly, 1995). This debate partially reflects the background of the participants—biological and developmental psychologists are more likely to focus on male-female differences as reflecting essential qualities of the person (woman's "true nature"), while social psychologists focus on such differences as constructed and negotiated through social interaction (Bohan, 1993; Deaux & Major, 1987; Eagly, 1995; Kahn & Yoder, 1989; Unger, 1989). The debate also reflects methods, with more qualitatively-oriented feminists coming down on the side of essentialism (e.g., Gilligan, 1982), and more quantitatively-oriented ones on the side of similarity (e.g., Hyde, 1991). The struggle between these perspectives led Rachel Hare-Mustin and Jeanne Marecek (1988) to characterize the field in terms of *alpha* and *beta* biases—the former the tendency to exaggerate differences, the latter the tendency to minimize them.

The existence of the debate does not mean lack of consensus on many feminist issues and principles, however. In 1993, the National Conference on Education and Training in Feminist Practice, sponsored by APA's Division of the Psychology of Women, brought together feminists of diverse perspectives and backgrounds to work in small groups to identify places of agreement in a variety of areas, including research, curriculum, therapy, and tests and assessments. A plenary session was used to identify consensus on feminist principles that will inform a feminist agenda for psychology into the 21st century (Worell & Johnson, 1997), and included a report of a working group on feminist principles for curriculum development in psychology at undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate levels (Chin

& Russo, 1997). A summary of the group's consensus on feminist principles is found in the Appendix.

## Methods and Ways of Constructing Knowledge

Because psychology is a science, psychologists are trained to view their scientific methods as the defining quality of their discipline. Methods provide a lens to examine reality, and psychological theory and method are inextricable. Thus, it should not be surprising that a substantial amount of feminist energy has focused on critiquing psychological methods. In addition to critiquing and reforming existing methods, feminist psychologists are also asking whether current methods can answer all the questions feminist psychologists want to ask.

Feminist critiques have opened the way for consideration of numerous methodologies that have not been highly valued or well-developed in the past. Recognizing that bias may be introduced at every step in the research process, critics have examined phases of research, from choice of broad topics, operational definitions, sampling, experiences of participants, characteristics of researchers, setting and choice of tasks, to the language used in the report of the research. Feminist psychology has sensitized researchers to ask the question, "What factors am I introducing when I choose a research method?" (Denmark et al., 1988; McHugh et al., 1986; Mednick, 1991; Wittig, 1985).

The scientific method has been constrained by the logic of hypothesis testing, which imposes limits on the kinds of questions that may be asked and the answers that are considered acceptable. Hypothesis testing leads one to

focus on differences between groups. Students in elementary statistics are traditionally taught that one is never to "test the null hypothesis" of no difference between groups; hence to find a statistically significant difference, one must study differences. Lack of difference can not be proven and, therefore, similarities are not reported in the literature, leading to over-reporting of gender differences. Statistical techniques that allow for multivariate analysis of relationships (e.g., multiple regression) and summarization of findings from many research studies (e.g., meta-analysis) help to avoid the dichotomous simplicity promoted by hypothesis testing. They also enable the researcher to explore complex causal relationships in "real world data," gathered outside of the artificial conditions of the laboratory. While many researchers have moved towards embracing these techniques as the explanatory limits of simple hypotheses came to be recognized, feminist psychologists have been in the forefront in recognizing and using the power of these techniques. It is noteworthy that gender differences research embraced and popularized meta-analysis quickly, because feminists recognized its power to examine the gender similarities and differences that are so vulnerable to the influence of stereotypes (e.g., Eagly, 1987; Hyde, 1981, 1994; Lewin & Wild, 1991; Morawski & Agronick, 1991).

In addition to recognizing the power of sophisticated quantitative techniques, feminist psychologists and their counterparts in other social sciences have explored, refined, and popularized the use of qualitative techniques to examine the depth of human experience (Worell & Robinson, 1994). Qualitative research techniques facilitate exploring human experiences in depth, allowing examination of the meaning of events in people's lives (Crawford & Marecek, 1989; Fine & Gordon, 1989; Reinharz, 1984, 1992; Rosser, 1990). Reductionism leads to emphasis on

the experimental method, which by design eliminates as many contextual variables as possible. The recognition of the value of context promotes methodologies that examine behaviors in the circumstances in which they occur and identify situations that mediate apparent effects of gender (Fine & Gordon, 1989; Lott, 1991; Morawski & Agronick, 1991; Wittig, 1985; Worell & Robinson, 1994).

Some researchers have pointed out that the nomothetic, or generalization seeking, orientation of most psychology research ignores cultural groups' diverse responses to similar stimuli. Emphasis on generalizability leads to the devaluation of qualitative research techniques that examine issues from the perspective of a small group of respondents without attempting to generalize the findings to all individuals. Indeed, proclaiming sweeping generalizability of results may inevitably lead to misapplication of findings by ignoring variations of circumstance that sometimes may be associated with gender, ethnic background, or other characteristics of individuals. Not every methodology is equally appropriate to people of all ethnic, ability, or sexual orientation groups (Brown, 1989; Fine & Asch, 1988; Reid, 1993, 1994; Reid & Kelly, 1994; Roy, 1993). Appropriate qualification and combinations of methods that permit more or less generalization are more realistic and valid ways to accumulate knowledge (Wittig, 1985).

Feminist psychologists have resisted the dichotomization of methodologies as quantitative vs. qualitative or scientific vs. nonscientific. The terms "objective" and "value-free" are not equivalent; "objective information" is information obtained in a manner that can be described, verified, and reproduced by others. Developing empirically measurable definitions through well specified procedures is at the heart of the scientific method (Russo & Dabul, 1994). This rationale mandates, rather than contradicts, a clear assessment of the values introduced into research

through methodological choices. It is precisely what distinguishes psychology from other constructions of knowledge about the human experience and one of the unique contributions that psychology can make to feminist knowledge. Although the feminist knowledge base, like that of psychology in general, still disproportionately rests on cross-sectional, one-shot studies based on white, middle class, college populations, feminist psychologists are their own best critics (Fine, 1985; Mednick, 1991). They are struggling to develop alternatives, and they generally believe that, ultimately, multiple methods with diverse participants will lead to the richest understanding of human beings (Lott, 1991).

Embracing varied methodologies includes recognizing the diverse activities of feminist psychologists. Perhaps partly because academic careers have not been as accessible to women as to men, women psychologists often have done their work in nonacademic settings (Russo & Dabul, 1994). Those settings have provided environments to explore diverse ways of examining the human experience, but contributions of those employed outside of academe are often not well documented. Gaining recognition for individuals who "do psychology" in different ways has been a component of feminist efforts in the field (Chin & Russo, 1997; Lott, 1991; Wittig, 1985).

Feminist psychologists have worked to increase the representativeness of psychologists. Many writers have pointed out the importance of expanding the curriculum to include issues of importance to under-represented groups as a means to attract members of those groups into the field. Efforts to increase representation of women in textbooks have been modestly successful, but representation of ethnic minority women or other under-represented groups is still abysmal (Bronstein & Paludi, 1988; Conti & Kimmel, 1993; Denmark, 1994; Peterson & Kroner, 1992;

Reid, 1994; Task Force on Representation in the Curriculum, 1995; Whitten, 1995). Conti and Kimmel's (1993) content analysis of twelve developmental texts identified only twenty-five mentions of people of color, three of which were specifically about girls or women. Bronstein and Paludi (1988) found that only half of the introductory textbooks they examined had a discussion of racism, sexism, or prejudice, and most placed little emphasis on the social context in which individuals function. Lott (1988) indicated that the inclusion of African American and other ethnic minority groups in social psychology journals and in presentations at APA conventions decreased after 1973, as did the emphasis on cultural contexts for behavior. Denmark (1994) reviewed twenty textbooks in introductory, social, developmental and abnormal psychology and found that discussions of women almost exclusively referred to research on white women, failing to mention the influence of ethnicity.

Assuming that visibility within the field affects recruitment, invisibility has serious consequences for the future of psychology, perpetuating the lack of representation in research and curriculum. Infusion of ideas about diverse people is important not only because it increases the likelihood of inclusive research, but also because such people may introduce paradigms that are the product of having lived an experience (White, 1991). It is not that valid research can be done only by members of a group, but that different insights arise from subjective understanding of the experiences of individuals and the context in which those experiences occur. Research by both members and nonmembers of groups is important for balance, particularly with research topics laden with stereotypic expectations.

# Alternatives and Transformations

In summary, feminist psychology has contributed to changes in the field of psychology in diverse ways. The transformation is in progress and the amount of change varies among subdisciplines and theoretical perspectives. On the theoretical level, feminist psychologists have been among the most influential contributors to discussions of alternatives to logical positivism and reductionism as the most informative or useful epistemological approaches to understanding human experiences (Wittig, 1985). Feminist psychologists have consistently pointed out the importance of generating accurate descriptions of complex behaviors, of seeking to understand the context in which behavior occurs, and of understanding the importance of cognitive constructs, such as roles, stereotypes, expectations, and power relationships in shaping people's actions (Worell & Etaugh, 1994).

On methodological issues, feminist psychologists have sought to clarify the roles of values and bias in research and have demanded that researchers acknowledge the inevitable bias in research and explicate the advantages and disadvantages of various methods. Although feminist psychologists hold diverse opinions on the validity of experimental methods that strip circumstances of situational context (Fine & Gordon, 1989; Mednick, 1991), even those who favor experimental design recognize the value of other research methods, including humanistic and phenomenological models that attribute credibility to subjective accounts of experiences (Hyde, 1994; Lott, 1991; Russo & Dabul, 1994).

Feminist psychologists have pointed out the usefulness of descriptive research that does not seek to generalize about all human behavior. While it is not implemented

sufficiently in feminist research, feminist psychologists have articulated the position that psychologists should not equate normative behavior and the behavior or the majority, and this principle extends to comparisons of majority and minority women.

The language of psychology has changed, largely because of feminist efforts. Indeed, that change has occurred beyond psychology, as the APA *Publication Manual* is so widely used as the style manual for scholarly and applied disciplines.

Feminist psychologists have encouraged psychologists to avoid the false dichotomy between scholarship and advocacy. There is vastly more knowledge on women and gender than there was two decades ago, much of it informed by feminist principles. And even that research which is not feminist increases the knowledge base on which to extend and criticize findings. Furthermore, feminist psychology has emphasized the importance of viewing women as active agents who shape their fate, and of studying models of coping with powerlessness and other situational constraints that result from societal inequities. There still is debate and discussion about how best to construct and interpret gender, and gender difference, but there is support for a multiplicity of feminist voices and the door is open for more research.

Women are better represented in the field. Their work is cited in textbooks, and publishers would no longer publish a textbook that contained only pictures of male psychologists. On the other hand, the work of women from under-represented groups is still not evident, nor are women psychologists of color pictured in textbooks (Denmark, 1994; Peterson & Kroner, 1992). The ratio of women to men is increasing and women will be the majority in the

future (Mednick, 1991). Yet, women still can be found in lower status positions in the discipline, and women who are avowedly feminist appear to have greater difficulty achieving the recognition and awards of the mainstream of the discipline (Morawski & Agronick, 1991). As Pamela T. Reid observed, "as we note the philosophical transformations and the theoretical developments, we must also acknowledge how some things never seem to change" (Reid, 1991, p. 93). Fortunately, the substantial gains of feminist psychology provide a solid foundation for maintaining momentum and meeting the challenges ahead.

## Appendix: Principles of Feminist Curriculum Development

These principles of curriculum development were developed by the Feminist Curriculum Group of the National Conference on Feminist Training and Practice, led by Jean Chin and Nancy Felipe Russo. Group members were Jill Bloom, Diane Felicio, Margaret Madden, Carolyn Zerbe Enns, Nicole Simi, Eloise Stiglitz, and Pat Rozée. The goal was to determine how we can educate and train women and men in psychology so that they possess the knowledge, skills, and sensitivity to generate and apply feminist principles in their work.

Eight principles were identified for developing and evaluating a feminist curriculum. Underlying values and assumptions as well as implications for knowledge and skills were identified for each principle (see Chin & Russo, 1997). The eight principles are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. They reflect a feminist perspective and commitment to a dynamic process of continuing self-examination. They do not attempt to tell people what to

teach. They seek to foster a feminist process of thoughtful examination, and are designed to inform curriculum development rather than define curriculum content.

## PRINCIPLE 1. DIVERSITY

**Assumption**: Each person is located within a socio-cultural context. Differences among us exist in our realities, perspectives, and world views based on cultural, racial, and other dimensions of difference.

**Value:** Given the diversity of individuals and cultures, we need to recognize and value diversity as key to a feminist curriculum. We need to value multiple perspectives over dichotomous ones in viewing reality. Our gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, and ablebodiedness are but some of the interacting influences that affect the way we view the world.

## PRINCIPLE 2. EGALITARIANISM AND EMPOWERMENT

**Assumption**: One's perspective is a function of her/his position in the socio-cultural structure from which one's power or non-power (i.e., oppression) emanates.

**Value**: Given the historical oppression and disempowerment of women, we strive for egalitarianism and empowerment of women.

## PRINCIPLE 3. SELF-DETERMINATION

**Assumption**: Women are active agents, not passive victims. We both shape as well as reflect our social context

in an interactive process as we try to select the best of choices open to us.

**Value**: We need to recognize the value of self-determination and respect diversity in the behaviors and coping strategies that women use in adapting to and dealing with their environments. Women may behave differently in coping with life experiences depending on their beliefs, values, and options, among other factors. A focus of feminist psychology thus becomes one of enhancing women's ability for self-determination. While this principle is closely related to that of empowerment, the emphasis of self-determination is on changes within the person rather than within the environmental context. It also recognizes that women may have their own notions about what is empowering and what is not. Feminist psychologists must have the knowledge and skills to help each woman clarify her own notions of empowerment if we are to respect the value of self-determination.

## *PRINCIPLE 4. COMPLEXITY*

**Assumption**: Reality is complex. Dichotomous thinking is both ineffective and unrealistic. If our models are to provide effective representations of human behavior in context, they must be multidimensional, interactive, and inclusive of differences.

## *PRINCIPLE 5. CONNECTION*

**Assumption:** Connection is the basis for human interaction. It is important to humans, particularly those who are oppressed, as a survival mechanism.

**Value**: Collaboration and connection are important to feminist thinking and to a feminist curriculum; they should be the basis for feminist action. We value a collaborative, affirming, transformative, and positive approach that reclaims women's history, that is, connects us with the past, and reflects feminist values.

## *PRINCIPLE 6. SOCIAL ACTION*

**Assumption:** Given current power inequalities and the social structures that reinforce them, things will not change without active intervention.

**Value:** Social change and action are important to evolve an egalitarian society. Feminist psychologists must be proactive and visionary to challenge the existing status quo.

## *PRINCIPLE 7. SELF-REFLECTION*

**Assumption:** The process of self-reflection at multiple levels (i.e., within a personal domain, within psychology, and within the feminist movement) should be informed by feminist principles. This process should be continuous and should evaluate our values, ethics, and biases.

**Value:** We value an active and self-reflective process as basic to feminist principles. This includes the ability to suspend one's point of view, and take other points of view. It includes the ability to critique our own points of view.

### *PRINCIPLE 8. INTEGRATIVE PERSPECTIVES*

**Assumption:** Human behavior, including actions, emotions, and cognitions, is a function of multiple factors including biological, psychological, physiological, spiritual, sociocultural ones.

**Value**: We value approaches that integrate perspectives from many fields of knowledge (including psychology's subfields) over those which isolate or emphasize any one of them. Integrating interdisciplinary ways of thinking about human behavior is crucial.

Developing a curriculum based on feminist principles requires a developmental perspective, with each level of academic training building on the previous one. At each level, educators must ask how a feminist perspective changes both the goals and strategies of education and what forms of knowledge should be acquired and created. Further, the process for curriculum development itself must reflect these principles. It needs to be self-critical, i.e., continuously reflecting on how our biases influence our thoughts and actions (See Chin & Russo, 1997).

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## *Electronic Resources*

**Women's Studies Resources on YAHOO:**

Contains information on numerous issues of interest to feminist psychologists: http://www.yahoo.com/social_science/women_s_studies/

**Women's Studies Database at University of Maryland:**

Extensive database with much information about scholarly work and pedagogical issues of interest to psychologists: http://www.inform.umd.edu:8080/EdRes/Topic/Womens Studies

**Gender and Sexuality Information at CMU**

Research and curricular material related to gender, sexuality, sexual orientation and related issues: http://english-www.hss.cmu.edu

**Women's Studies Information via Kenyon College**

Assortment of information related to gender and women's issues, including material of interest to psychologists: gopher://gopher.kenyon.edu

**UW System Women's Studies Librarian Information:**

Thorough and extensive bibliographies on issues related to scholarly work and pedagogy in women's studies: gopher://silo.adp.wisc.edu/11/.uwlibs/.womenstudies

**Gender-Related Electronic Forums:**

Long list of electronic mail lists and other forums on gender-related issues:

http://research.umbc.edu/~korenman/wmst/links.html

**Psychology at Rice University:**

Includes a number of subject guides to diversity and women's issues in psychology: gopher://riceinfo.rice.edu/11/subject/socpsy

**POWR-L Electronic Mailing List on psychology of women:**

The official electronic network of the Division of the Psychology of Women of the American Psychological Association: Send message SUBSCRIBE POWR-L to LISTSERV@uriacc.uri.edu

## *Organizational Resources*

**American Psychological Association,**
Women's Program Office
750 First St., NW
Washington, DC, 20002-4242
phone: 202-336-6044

**APA Committee on Women in Psychology,**
Contact Women's Program Office above.

**Psychology of Women Division of the American Psychological Association (Division 35),**
Division 35 Central Office
919 W. Marshall Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85013
Email: div35apa@aol.com
Watch for the Division's new Web page

**Association for Women in Psychology,**
Colleen Gregory, Membership
PO Box 1512
Kingston, RI 02881-0491

# About the Authors

Nancy Felipe Russo is Professor of Psychology and Women's Studies at Arizona State University. Author of more than 170 publications, Russo has been involved in a variety of activities to diversify psychology's curriculum and increase the representation of women and minorities in the field. Editor of the *Psychology of Women Quarterly,* and a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and the American Psychological Society, her awards include Division 35's Carolyn Wood Sherif Award, in recognition of pioneering contributions to research, teaching, mentoring, and service to psychology and society. Russo is also the recipient of APA's 1996 Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychology in the Public Interest.

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# Reader Comment

## Discipline Analysis Essay: Psychology

Thank you for taking a few minutes to provide us with feedback on how you've used this essay. If you have shared it with others, please feel free to copy this form and provide it to them.

| Circle the appropriate number: | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ◆ This essay gave an effective summary of issues regarding women in the discipline | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ◆ The information on the discipline was clear | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ◆ Concepts and vocabulary were easy to understand | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ◆ The information in the main body of the essay was useful for course revision | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ◆ The references were very useful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**How did you learn about this essay? Check all that apply.**

- ☐ Publication notice
- ☐ Faculty workshop
- ☐ Conference presentation
- ☐ Internet listing
- ☐ Summer institute
- ☐ Other (what?_____)

**What use did you make of the essay? Check all that apply.**

- ☐ Read it for my own knowledge
- ☐ Used to revise a course
- ☐ Shared with colleagues
- ☐ Assigned as classroom reading

**Please tell us something about your institution. Is it a:**

- ☐ high school
- ☐ two-year college
- ☐ four-year college
- ☐ research university
- ☐ other (what?_____)

**Also tell us something about yourself. Are you: (check all that apply)**

- ☐ a faculty member (If so, what is your discipline of training? _____)
- ☐ a student (If so, what is your major? _____)
- ☐ an administrator
- ☐ other (what?_____)

**How much formal academic training have you received in this discipline?**

- ☐ none
- ☐ one or two courses as an undergraduate
- ☐ undergraduate major
- ☐ some graduate training
- ☐ master's degree training
- ☐ Ph.D. degree training

*For additional comments, please write on the back of this card or attach additional pages.*

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# Publications of the National Center for Curriculum Transformation Resources on Women

## WOMEN IN THE CURRICULUM

**The following publications consist of directories, manuals, and essays covering the primary information needed by educators to transform the curriculum to incorporate the scholarship on women. The publications have been designed to be brief, user friendly, and cross referenced to each other. They can be purchased as a set or as individual titles. Tables of contents and sample passages are available on the National Center Web page: http://www.towson.edu/ncctrw/.**

➢ ***Directory of Curriculum Transformation Projects and Activities in the U.S.***

The *Directory* provides brief descriptions of 237 curriculum transformation projects or activities from 1973 to the present. It is intended to help educators review the amount and kinds of work that have been occurring in curriculum transformation on women and encourage them to consult project publications (see also *Catalog of Resources*) and to contact project directors for more information about projects of particular interest and relevance to their needs.

*386 pages, 8½ x 11 hardcover, $30 individuals, $45 institutions, ISBN 1-885303-07-6*

➢ ***Catalog of Curriculum Transformation Resources***

The *Catalog* lists materials developed by curriculum transformation projects and national organizations that are available either free or for sale. These include proposals, reports, bibliographies, workshop descriptions, reading lists, revised syllabi, classroom materials, participant essays, newsletters, and other products of curriculum transformation activities, especially from those projects listed in the *Directory*. These resources provide valuable information, models, and examples for educators leading and participating in curriculum transformation activities.

*(Available fall 1997)*

➢ ***Introductory Bibliography for Curriculum Transformation***

The *Introductory Bibliography* provides a list of references for beginning curriculum transformation on women, especially for those organizing projects and activities for faculty and teachers. It does not attempt to be comprehensive but rather to simplify the process of selection by offering an "introduction" that will lead you to other sources.

*15 pages, 6 x 9 paper, $7, ISBN 1-885303-32-7*

➢ ***Getting Started: Planning Curriculum Transformation***

*Planning Curriculum Transformation* describes the major stages and components of curriculum transformation projects as they have developed since about 1980. Written by Elaine Hedges, whose long experience in women's studies and curriculum transformation projects informs this synthesis, *Getting Started* is designed to help faculty and administrators initiate, plan, and conduct faculty development and curriculum projects whose purpose is to incorporate the content and perspectives of women's studies and race/ethnic studies scholarship into their courses.

*124 pages, 6 x 9 hardcover, $20 individuals, $30 institutions, ISBN 1-885303-06-8*

➢ ***Internet Resources on Women: Using Electronic Media in Curriculum Transformation***

This manual gives clear, step-by-step instructions on how to use e-mail, find e-mail addresses, and access e-mail discussion lists relevant to curriculum transformation. It explains Telnet, FTP, Gopher, and the World Wide Web, and how to access and use them. It discusses online information about women on e-mail lists and World Wide Web sites. Written by Joan Korenman, who has accumulated much experience through running the Women's Studies e-mail list, this manual is a unique resource for identifying information for curriculum transformation on the Internet. Updates to this manual will be available on the World Wide Web at http://www.umbc.edu/wmst/updates.html .

*130 pages, 6 x 9 hardcover, $20 individuals, $30 institutions, ISBN 1-885303-08-4*

➢ ***Funding: Obtaining Money for Curriculum Transformation Projects and Activities***

This manual is intended to assist educators who lack experience in applying for grants but are frequently expected to secure their own funding for projects. The manual provides an overview of the process, basic information and models, and advice from others experienced in fund raising.

*150 pages,6 x 9 hardcover, $20 individuals, $30 institutions, ISBN 1-885303-05-x*

➢ ***Evaluation: Measuring the Success of Curriculum Transformation***

This manual outlines several designs which could be used when assessing the success of a project. *Evaluation: Measuring the Success of Curriculum Transformation* is written by Beth Vanfossen, whose background in the teaching of research methods as well as practical experience in conducting evaluation research informs the manual's advice. Evaluation is an increasingly important component of curriculum transformation work on which project directors and others often need assistance.

*(Available fall 1997)*

➢ ***Discipline Analysis Essays***

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