

A Brief History of The Women's Issues Committee
National Council of Schools and Programs in Professional Psychology

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The history of the NCSPP clearly speaks to an organizational commitment to find innovative and socially responsible approaches to professional education and training that intentionally includes the advancement of women. The road to its current achievements have been hard won and much is owed to the women who were part of the founding of this great organization. This overview is but a small token of appreciation for the work that all of the women who are past and present delegates of the NCSPP.

At its inception in 1976, the NCSPP organization mirrored most of the institutions of its day in terms of having fewer women than men who participated as delegates and none held leadership roles. Joanne Callan was the lone woman's voice for several years in the organization and was the first woman to hold a leadership role. As its third president she moved the organization forward by framing its incorporation in 1985. The contrast of her dynamic presence and the lack of the presence of other women and none of color gave rise to issues of gender and racial diversity which are now central to the NCSPP Mission. From these beginning the women's legacy subsequently includes many stories of resilient women who have been integral to NCSPP governance, the implementation of programming and policy and the development of local NCSPP member programs.

It seems apropos at this point to mention some of the women who helped to pioneer professional psychology as a new movement in psychology. As mentioned earlier, Joanne Callan was a founding member of the incorporated NCSPP. She was also the lead author of the first NCSPP Self Study which was published in 1986. In the following year, the organization held the Mission Bay Conference where standards and evaluation in professional psychology was operationalized in terms of requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes that uniquely defined professional psychology education and training as competency-based training. This conference also established diversity and social responsibility as key parts in the foundation of professional psychology education.

After the Mission Bay Conference, the number of women delegates to NCSPP increased measurably, especially in response to intentional efforts to bring more gender, racial and ethnic diversity into the organization. As a result more women and more women of color attended the 1989 Puerto Rico Conference. Many of these women have remained involved in the organization throughout its current development.

From the stand point of content as well as process, this multi-racial core of women delegates were instrumental in making the Ethnic/Racial Diversity Conference one of the most memorable ones in the history of the organization. Their collaboration on diversity issues during that meeting also emphasized to all of the delegates that a women's conference would be essential if the NCSPP was going to sustain the uniqueness of the mandate within professional psychology. As a result of their collective advocacy, specific language concerning the inclusion of women was drafted into the Resolutions of the 1989

Ethnic Racial Diversity Conference. That language specified that the NCSPP would hold a mid-winter Woman's Conference in 1991.

Thus far this brief overview provides some of the details of what women did to gain influence within this organization while making meaningful contributions to the field of professional psychology. The next section of this account will especially highlight how the Women's Issues Committee (WIC) came into being and how it has become the clarion for what is happening to continue the advancement of women in professional psychology.

Two years in the making, the Women's Conference was held in Scottsdale Arizona. The mantle of conference leadership was given to Glenace Hall who encouraged and at times pushed the organization through its growing pains about women's issues. The result was a powerful conference entitled "Raising the Roof" which is a metaphor for the glass ceiling that generally affects the upward mobility of women in society, including professional psychology. The proceedings of that conference are still alive in the agenda of the WIC.

The success of that conference sent a signal that women needed a more organized voice in the governance of the organization. Thus they won a committee position on the Board as proposed and voted on by the membership in 1991. However, the "Women's Issues Committee" was still ten years from becoming the name of that standing committee because there were concerns that men's issues needed to be addressed as well within the organization. Thus the first committee that was designed to address the concerns of women was called the "Gender Issues Committee (GIC)". As an observation, men's issues did not seem to impact the agenda of the committee although men have always attended and participated in the work of the GIC. The name was formally changed in 2000 to the Women's Issues Committee to reflect that the work of the committee was inclusive of diverse philosophies and theories concerning women, as well as a focus on women's issues of social and professional wellbeing. The focus has especially been on the advancement of women in regard to career and faculty roles, but also in regard to other areas of social and professional concern.

The work of the WIC has always been celebratory and reflective of forward thinking. For example, the NCSPP finished its second self study in 1996. Women's issues were prominently highlighted in terms of their numbers in professional schools and issues of women's power and presence were also represented in many aspects of that self study. While this represented a lot of progress from the first self study, it was not sufficient to provide the WIC with information upon which to build an informed agenda. Under the leadership of Susan Hawes, the WIC conducted its own study. That study was completed in 1997 and its contents have been an important influence on the WIC agenda for the past nine years. Issues such as halftime internships, women in leadership roles, and training future psychologists to appreciate the post modern construction of women's role in psychology and in broader society have been important themes for the WIC.

With the awareness that seventy-five percent of the students in professional schools are women and an increasing number of women are faculty and administrators, the WIC senses an even stronger imperative to advocate for women and to develop educational programs, research protocols, and curricula that better address the historical and emergent needs of women as students, faculty and clients.

Resolutions from the Raising the Roof Conference

Specifically, the Women's Issues Committee:

1) shall monitor NCSPP's implementation of the following resolutions:

- a) NCSPP and its member schools pay special attention to issues related to women of color, and include consideration of these issues in the development, planning and implementation of the agenda of NCSPP
- b) NCSPP and its member schools pay special attention to issues related to lesbians, and include consideration of these issues in the development, planning and implementation of the agenda of NCSPP
- c) NCSPP shall develop a list of consultants who will be able to provide information on the design and development of promotion and tenure and retention policies that are sensitive to, and inclusive of, the broad range of activities in which women contribute to the field of psychology.
- d) NCSPP and its member schools commit themselves to the development of research methods and theoretical formulations that increase the understanding of women's issues.
- e) NCSPP and its member schools attend to the policies, structures and procedures of their organizations so that they accurately reflect women's experience and facilitate women's professional development.
- f) NCSPP and its member schools prepare students personally, academically, and professionally to be sensitive to and effectively work with the issues and needs of women as consumers of psychology.
- g) NCSPP and its member schools work to develop institutional policies at the local, state and national levels which acknowledge, accommodate and advance women in the field of psychology.
- h) NCSPP considers the impact of all its proposed actions and policies on women.
- i) NCSPP provides a governance function in regard to proposed policies emanating from APA and other bodies, to determine whether such policies are sensitive to the concerns of women (e.g. residency requirement)
- j) NCSPP supports a variety of training models that utilize half-time internships and alternative training vehicles that are responsive to the diverse needs of students with particular attention to women, people of color and other groups with special needs.

k) NCSPP supports the inclusion of part-time faculty as legitimate partners in educational models that aim to increase the diversity of its faculty,

l) NCSPP preserves and encourages the availability of diverse training models in a variety of institutional settings.

m) shall develop a mechanism of advocacy and support by which it can be responsive to complaints of gender insensitivity or a lack of attention to issues relevant to women in our member institutions; and

n) shall develop an accountability mechanism by which it can monitor schools with respect to their progress in advancing women's issues and concerns in the institutions

o) shall develop a mechanism by which NCSPP can serve as a resource for member institutions which are developing policies that will enhance the role of women's issues such as sexual harassment issues, family leave policies, etc.
