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WOMEN AND THE CORE CURRICULUM

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The roles and contribution of women in psychology have dramatically expanded during the past 15 years, a period coincident with the development and growth of the professional school movement. The theoretical and practical issues relevant to training created by this change are diverse, substantial, and fundamental. They will be examined by the National Council of Schools of Professional Psychology at its midwinter 1990-1991 meeting, entitled "Women in Psychology." In this chapter, we anticipate some of the issues that will structure the more complete discussions, while focusing specifically on those that have immediate implications for the core curriculum and the process of training. We consider, first, issues relevant to the academic content of psychology, and then we discuss issues that have a major impact on the structure of professional training curricula, experiences, and processes.

Women and the Content of Psychology

Although one might readily assume that incorporating women into a discipline requires little adaptation on the part of the discipline, the actual experience has been quite different (Harding & Hintikka, 1983; D. Smith, 1987). Women's relation to psychology is analogous to a traditional quilt that women pieced together from bits of fabric and the still good parts of old clothes (cf. Edwall, chap. 17). Formalized in feminist critiques and reformulations, previous work and ideas are by no means discarded but wrested from their original contexts, scrutinized with an eye to potential use, and then combined with new material to create a functional product different in form from what had previously existed. Feminist understandings of and contributions to the core meaning of the discipline of psychology have displayed this sort of conservatorship: The traditional

ways of thinking and working have been dismantled while saving the most useful components to be reused in new contexts and for new purposes. The new contexts and purposes articulated by women in psychology open fundamental and critical questions regarding the nature of the discipline. Seen in the new frame provided by the quilt's increasingly complex pattern, structure, and design, the answers both to contemporary questions and to those previously raised take on new and broader meanings.

We illustrate some of the revisionary process by briefly considering contributions of feminist scholarship to questions of the metatheory of psychology and to specific theoretical issues.

Metatheoretical Contributions

Philosophers and various social scientists interested in placing women and women's experiences into the discourse of psychology have noted that fundamental categories seem to change and shift with each consideration. We do not attempt to redefine such basic categories as epistemology or ontology along the lines of this discussion, but we will comment on some of the most important issues that have been raised.

First, there must be new ways of conceptualizing means of knowing in order to incorporate the perspective of the knower who has been placed outside the canons of knowledge and of the processes of knowing. Miller (1976, 1986), for example, illustrated clearly the different realities known to "dominants" and to "subordinates" and the different epistemological status credited to each. Women's knowledge has been described variously as intuitive, emotional, and irrational, seeming to lack the clarity and precision of male rationality (Bordo, 1987). Paradoxically, however, subordinates, and especially perhaps female subordinates, often attain detailed knowledge of the workings of the epistemology of dominants. They learn to use this system both to function in the limited public domains they are allowed and also to predict the behavior of dominants. This feature of subordinate knowledge, sloganized in the 1970s as the epistemological advantage of the oppressed, is a sort of open secret, whose frank acknowledgment supposedly would occasion cultural revolution (French, 1985; Janeway, 1980). Hidden in this discussion, however, are questions that our discipline must now engage: What is the relation of power to knowledge? In what ways does our accumulated wisdom reproduce cultural patterns of inclusion and exclusion? How has the masculine tradition of rationality shaped our concerns, our discourse? What has it meant to have dichotomized affect and thought and to have associated affect with irrationality?

Second, questions regarding knowledge lead to new understandings, and perhaps to puzzles, regarding the knower. In the traditional construction, the unit of analysis for all categories of interest, whether thought, affect, morality, or economic behavior, is the individual. The individual is stereotypically male: autonomous, giving definition to rather than being defined by connections to other entities, and ontologically separated from the objects of his consideration (cf. Scheman, 1983). Empirical research done from the standpoint of the knower who is subordinate, however, reveals a quite different picture: Knowledge, feeling, morality, and perhaps even the self may exist not as entities but as relations. The implications here are staggering: What has been aberrant, pathological, or even impossible in most of our theories may be normative for large numbers of persons (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, Ward, & Taylor, 1989). Furthermore, perhaps the masculine model of autonomy is itself a myth, depending for survival on hidden, often trivialized forms of connection (Parry, 1989). Rich (1979) compared this

phenomenon to a tapestry: The clarity and distinctiveness of objects on the front depend on complicated, intricate, and hidden connections on the back. According to Scheman (1983), the objects of psychology have had a traditional construction as singular, autonomous selves. That construction now appears in need of dramatic revision.

Finally, these considerations highlight the critical role of various forms of context in the creation and maintenance of our theoretical constructions. The epistemological and ontological positions previously discussed show the effects of having been constructed in particular sociopolitical (and metaphysical) contexts and are now being challenged or changed in different contexts. This virtual truism leads, however, to a host of problems with which feminist thinkers are attempting to grapple: What constitutes relevant context? How can we both live the construction of our contexts and simultaneously examine and alter them? Perhaps most important, how does a construction rooted in a context relate to lived experience: Is constructionism, although analytically useful, yet another form of subject-object dichotomizing that limits or reduces the meaning of experience to the people living them, usually not those doing the theorizing (Allen, 1989)?

These issues, we suggest, do not yield simple solutions. They require active engagement if psychology is to evolve in ways that reflect and address the diverse experiences of persons of different cultures.

Specific Theoretical Contributions

The aforementioned considerations imply matters of more immediate concern for professional psychology. Perhaps the most basic of these is methodology. As Harding (1983, 1986) and others pointed out, traditional methods of investigation in the social sciences are reliant on subject-object dualism along with attendant assumptions about the independence of the two and on the epistemological superiority of the subject (investigator). Various methods, usually modeled on anthropological researches or adapted from phenomenological investigation, have been proposed as alternatives. They may, indeed, yield richer information but have not yet fully addressed the basic issues. Some critics, in fact, suggest that the language of investigation itself incorporates such cultural bias that knowledge across the dominant-subordinate divide may not be possible (Belenky et al., 1986). Even without such radical limitations, work such as that of Gilligan (1982), Gilligan et al. (1989), and Belenky et al. (1986) demonstrated that, given more opportunities to structure the investigation in their own terms, women tell considerably different stories about their lives than when questions are structured for (about) them. Methods, both experimental and clinical, will continue to need to be informed by greater sensitivity to the meanings of subjects who cannot be reduced to objects.

Second, from the previous discussion of ontology, psychology in general, and professional psychology in particular, is faced with the task of rethinking its definition as expressed in its choice of the individual as the basic unit of analysis. Although intriguing questions regarding individual existence are likely to persist, they must be held in potentially productive tension with pressing questions of the nature of social or collective realities that also structure psychological meaning.

Third, the very work characterized at the outset as quilt making requires a new appreciation, understanding, and incorporation of change processes into the content of psychological theory. Social constructionism and various historical researchers have contributed to our realization that our understanding of what constitutes our core has

changed markedly (e.g., Peterson, chap. 3). However there is still tremendous pressure in the social sciences and in the philosophy of science on which they are based to assume a static nature for psychological entities (Harding & Hintikka, 1983; Lakoff, 1987). Feminist critiques and reformulations press the point not only that the canons of knowledge and skill should be opened but that they routinely are. The ways in which this should and does happen could be profitably considered.

The contribution of these and related points that feminist theorists have been raising seems to us to emphasize the critical need in professional training to structure a curriculum that is fitted to the worlds of those whom we serve rather than to the history of the discipline. This perspective is all the more pressing because women, who have historically been excluded from processes of both generation and consumption of psychological knowledge, are rapidly becoming the majority of trainees and practitioners of professional psychology. The discipline must understand and respond to this change.

Training and Educational Processes

In developing graduate-level training programs, the emphasis has been generally on what training to provide, how to provide it, and how to assess its effectiveness. Little attention has been given to modification of training processes in response to differences between students. This lack of attention can be seen as a function of the traditional uniformity among graduate students in terms of age, gender, race, cultural background, and sexual orientation. However, attracting and training a more diverse student body requires challenging the assumption that conventional educational processes are equally appropriate for all students. Of specific relevance is the impact of gender on training because professional psychology graduate students are increasingly female, and women now constitute the majority of students in most doctorate-level professional training programs.

Research and theory suggest that the professional development of women and men differs at both the graduate and postgraduate levels. Implications of this research for the graduate training of women are examined in the following sections.

Graduate-Level Training

Professional role models. Entry into professional roles is facilitated by the presence of role models, important figures within the field with whom one can identify. Within the field of psychology, there is a long history of gender inequality in training and career opportunities, compensation, achievement, and recognition (Over, 1983). Women who have contributed significantly to the field have been ignored in textbooks and in courses on the history of psychology (Russo & Denmark, 1987). Thus, the opportunity for female graduate students to identify with experiences of their successful predecessors is limited not only by historical realities but also by neglect of the contributions that women have made. Recent publications that bring to light the history of women in psychology are an important step in filling this gap (Russo & Denmark, 1987; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). Incorporation of this material into course work and into general textbooks remains a pressing need.

Mentoring relationships. Mentoring relationships are generally identified as an

essential component of professional development. They can facilitate progress through training programs, help in the development of professional identities, and directly assist in entry into the profession through coauthored publications and presentations and through establishment of professional contacts. The importance of such relationships for men entering professional roles is well known (Levinson et al., 1978). Mentoring relationships may be even more important for women (Gilbert, 1985). At the same time, establishment of successful mentoring relationships is likely to be more difficult for women (Bogat & Redner, 1985).

Same-sex role models may be particularly beneficial to women (Gilbert, Gallessich, & Evans, 1983; Goldstein, 1979). Female students seek out female mentors, even when they are fewer in number, less available, and less senior than male faculty (Gilbert, 1985). Female mentors may provide modeling and support particularly appropriate to the needs of female students. For example, although both men and women place importance on the mentor's professional skills and personal characteristics, female students also look for role models who can demonstrate integration of family and work roles (Erkut & Mokros, 1984; Gilbert, 1985) because this is a crucial issue in the professional development of many women.

At the same time, availability of female faculty who can serve as mentors is limited. The majority of faculty in clinical and other professional programs continue to be male (Plon, Kohout, & Wicherski, 1989). In addition, the majority of female faculty members are in nontenured, assistant professor positions (Plon et al., 1989). Increases in numbers of female faculty members have not expanded into higher faculty or administrative ranks. Evidence that established senior faculty are more likely to serve as mentors (Bogat & Redner, 1985) suggests that the very limited numbers of women at this level seriously restricts development of successful mentoring relationships.

Mentoring relationships between male faculty members and female students may have their own inherent problems. Reluctance of male faculty to invest in the professional development of female students is long-standing (Hirschberg & Itkin, 1978; Trow, 1977). Although overt prejudices against women students may have diminished during the last decade, a new ambivalence about women entering psychology has emerged. Many in the profession have become concerned and even alarmed that the increasing presence of women will result in the decline in income and in status to those traditionally associated with female occupations. As in other traditionally male professions that are experiencing an influx of women, it can be difficult to go beyond an attitude of grudging acceptance. To the degree that these attitudes are present, they necessarily undermine faculty investment in the professional development of female students.

Sexualization of male faculty member–female student relationships also continues to be a problem. Complaints to ethics boards and surveys of female graduate students suggest that this problem persists in many graduate programs despite recognition that such relationships are detrimental to the student and constitute abuse of unequal status and power within the professor–student relationship (Keith-Spiegel & Koocher, 1985).

Teaching and training processes. On the basis of their extensive interviews of young adult women, Belenky et al. (1986) argued that educational programs for women should reflect the learning styles and the academic experiences of women rather than imposing those based on men. They found that the traditional educational format in which the authoritarian expert dispenses information to be absorbed by the novice student undermines the intellectual development of women. Confirmation that their knowledge and skills provide a foundation for further learning and provision of a col-

laborative professor-student context for learning are prerequisites for the intellectual development of women. These findings have important implications for the ways in which graduate programs help women develop the confidence and skills required to acquire knowledge critically rather than to absorb it uncritically.

Postgraduate Career Development

Although, in general, professionally oriented men prepare for and experience a direct, linear pattern of career development, this is not the experience of most women (Havighurst, 1982). Within our culture, the responsibilities of family relationships (raising children, attending to domestic crises, caring for aging parents) continue to fall on women. As a result, preparation for and development of a career is shaped by the need to balance the demands of family and work. Women are more likely than men to struggle with psychological integration of professional and family identities, to begin preparation for and to enter careers "off time," and to structure work roles to accommodate family needs. Little is known about the impact of this process on the personal experiences of women (Baruch, Biener, & Barnett, 1987). In addition, little attention continues to be given to restructuring the profession to facilitate an integration of, rather than a choice between, family responsibilities and career advancement. For example, requirements for full-time commitment to graduate study and reluctance to commit training resources to off-time older students are likely to have a differential impact on women entering the field. Similarly, once in the field, the extent to which consistent, full-time career commitment is essential to success is likely to have a negative impact on opportunities for advancement available to women.

Conclusion

The increasing number of well-qualified women applying to professional training programs demonstrates that women are experiencing a strong interest in the career roles and opportunities available in psychology; they are an essential resource for the future of the field. The feminist critiques and reformulations of psychology intellectually support and are supported by this development. Acceptance of women into doctorate-level programs in professional psychology indicates a commitment to their training and career advancement. The challenge confronting programs is to construct a high-quality "quilt" of professional training that combines the changes in content, structure, and processes to which these women are entitled.