

# Psychological Practice With Women

**Guidelines, Diversity, Empowerment**

Edited by Carolyn Zerbe Enns, Joy K. Rice, and Roberta L. Nutt



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# Psychological Practice With Women

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## SERIES FOREWORD

Applying a feminist lens to current concerns facing individuals, families, schools, communities, and nations can provide deeper insight into and understanding of contemporary social issues, including poverty, immigration, violence toward and abuse of women and children, and physical and mental health disparities. Most important, such work can identify and promote interventions and solutions that improve women's status in society and advance social justice. The American Psychological Association's (APA's) Psychology of Women Book Series is designed to support and disseminate feminist scholarship on education, research, and practice that can contribute to advocacy and social activism on behalf of women and other disempowered groups. It reflects a primary principle of feminist psychology: the application of knowledge through action.

Whereas consciousness of women's issues and the psychology of women began with emphasis primarily on White, middle-class women, the series extends scholarship and concerns about diversity and the intersectionality of multiple social identities of individuals, highlighting not only demographic trends in the United States but also the interplay between national and global concerns. The interacting identities considered include race, ethnicity,



gender, sexual orientation, nationality, socioeconomic status, religion, ability, and age. Specific objectives are to synthesize, integrate, and apply empirical knowledge and clinical perspectives for women who represent dimensions of diversities previously ignored or underrepresented in research and clinical application and to extend psychological theory on women and gender so that it is both more diverse and inclusive of all groups of women.

Some of the outstanding books in the series grew out of APA or divisional task forces set up to investigate and summarize current knowledge about socially relevant concerns. The editors of this volume were co-chairs of the APA task force that developed the 2007 "Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Girls and Women." Beginning with the framework of the 2007 Guidelines, the book provides valuable examples of how these aspirational guidelines can be applied to clinical practice and the provision of mental health services to women and girls. Its focus on the intersection and multiple layers of women's social identity is unique and should provide many insights for those interested in working with diverse groups. Each of the chapters that focus on a particular population includes extensive consideration of feminist scholarship (both research and theory) relevant to the group identity, applies the relevant scholarship, explores a variety of therapeutic approaches through the use of case studies, and considers possibilities for advocacy and social change. Moreover, the chapter authors highlight positive approaches based on resiliency and targeted toward the empowerment of women.

The editors begin and end the book by emphasizing the theme of the transformation of psychology and the necessity of inclusion of essential feminist perspectives. They see the book as an effort to promote such a "transformation on how we understand, conceptualize and treat diverse groups of women" (p. 4). Transforming the knowledge, norms, and practices of a profession requires a great deal more than one book. Nonetheless, through the presentation of up-to-date culturally based research, current feminist theory, and their application to clinical practice, this book will help to advance and transform the practice of psychology.

Linda J. Beckman, PhD  
Series Editor

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We wish to acknowledge and thank Linda Beckman, American Psychological Association Division 35 book series editor, who encouraged us to propose this book. The persistent efforts of our acquisitions editor, Maureen Adams, the thoughtful facilitation of Beth Hatch, development editor, Liz Brace, production editor, and Christina Edwards, copy editor, and the creative supervision of our design editor, Ron Teeter, have been invaluable. We are grateful for their efforts and those of other reviewers who read and reviewed chapters and provided constructive feedback. We

also appreciate the support of interest group sections within the Society for the Psychology of Women in Division 35 and the Section for the Advancement of Women in Division 17, which were central to identifying the dedicated group of authors who wrote chapters about women's diversity and psychological practice. Of course, the value of this book and its contribution to the field of psychological practice are largely due to the great and varied contributions of the many writers who volunteered for this project, who took great care in writing their chapters, and who were willing to write multiple drafts in response to our feedback. Finally, as we look back over the preparation of this book, we also wish to thank and acknowledge the importance of our families, friends, and professional colleagues who have been unfailingly supportive and encouraging throughout this project.

# CONTENTS

Contributors.....	vii
Series Foreword.....	ix
Acknowledgments .....	xi
Chapter 1.      Transforming Psychological Practice With Women: An Introduction.....	3
<i>Joy K. Rice, Carolyn Zerbe Enns, and Roberta L. Nutt</i>	
Chapter 2.      Working With Diverse Women: Tools for Assessment and Conceptualization.....	31
<i>Carolyn Zerbe Enns, Joy K. Rice, and Roberta L. Nutt</i>	
Chapter 3.      Women and Girls of Black/African Descent .....	53
<i>Wendi S. Williams</i>	

Chapter 4.	The Mosaic of Latinas in the United States: Psychological Practice With Latina Women and Girls .....	81
	<i>Dianna Marisol González, Carrie L. Castañeda-Sound, and Rachel L. Navarro</i>	
Chapter 5.	Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Women .....	109
	<i>Connie R. Matthews</i>	
Chapter 6.	The Intersection of Gender and Ethnicity: Asian-Pacific Islander American Women.....	135
	<i>Phi Loan Le and Khanh T. Dinh</i>	
Chapter 7.	Women With Disabilities: Affirmative Practice and Assessment .....	159
	<i>Martha E. Banks, Kathleen S. Brown, Linda R. Mona, and Rosalie J. Ackerman</i>	
Chapter 8.	Psychological Practice With Native Women .....	191
	<i>Wendy M. K. Peters, Kee J. E. Straits, and Pilar E. Gauthier</i>	
Chapter 9.	Transnational Psychological Practice With Women: Perspectives From East Asia and Japan.....	225
	<i>Sayaka Machizawa and Carolyn Zerbe Enns</i>	
Chapter 10.	Inclusive and Affirmative Psychological Practice: Unifying Themes.....	257
	<i>Joy K. Rice, Carolyn Zerbe Enns, and Roberta L. Nutt</i>	
Index .....		277
About the Editors.....		289

# Psychological Practice With Women



# 1

## TRANSFORMING PSYCHOLOGICAL PRACTICE WITH WOMEN: AN INTRODUCTION

JOY K. RICE, CAROLYN ZERBE ENNS, AND ROBERTA L. NUTT

There are hundreds, maybe thousands, of books on diversity urging psychologists and others to become more knowledgeable and sensitive to diverse populations of people. So why read yet another book on diversity? How is this book different, and how will it help psychologists in practice, be it clinical, research, or teaching? Our aim here is ambitious. We believe psychology and its practitioners need to understand, appreciate, and put into practice the complexities of working with groups of women and girls who embody and live with multiple layers of diverse identities. And this situation is far more common than one would first anticipate in working with women. As but one example, a clinician can explore a layer of identity with a Latina woman and find a Puerto Rican, bisexual mother who has decided her Latina identity takes precedence over her gender and openly embraces that identity, but hides her sexual orientation. In this book, our authors tackle the complexities of working with women and girls who live at the “borders,” negotiating

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multiple identities related to race, ethnicity, class, geography, sexual orientation, and disability. It is not an easy task to help these clients not only to understand their complex path, but also to choose the right interventions, assessments, and resources. This book is chock full of helpful perspectives, techniques, and case studies for psychologists and practitioners who want to be more effective and knowledgeable about working with diverse groups of women. Further, we believe if these issues and knowledge base are centralized in psychological practice, there will be a real transformation on how we understand, conceptualize, and treat diverse groups of women and girls.

Transformation has been a central goal within the psychology of women for many years (Crawford & Marecek, 1989). As early as 1968, Weisstein (1993) declared that “psychology has nothing to say” (p. 197) about women’s experiences. She criticized psychologists for ignoring the social context of women’s lives and relying on speculative theories that were not supported by evidence. Twenty years after Weisstein’s famous speech, Crawford and Marecek (1989) defined the goal of transformation as requiring self-reflective attitudes and changing the norms, practices, and content of psychology.

This book represents an effort to further this transformation in a variety of ways. *Diversity* and *empowerment*, two words that are highlighted in the subtitle of this book, are sometimes identified as buzzwords that have been overused or have limited meaning. We use these words deliberately and purposefully. By using the word *diversity*, we aim to underline the importance of all women’s experiences. Diversity involves centralizing the experiences, strengths, and struggles of women of color and from other marginalized groups, drawing our attention to the social-ecological context and complexities of their lives. This book uses an intersectional perspective, often referred to as *intersectionality*, to explore, highlight, and clarify women’s multiple and intersecting identities (Shields, 2008), encouraging readers to think in more complicated and nuanced ways about all women’s lives. Second, many chapters in this book are written primarily by authors of diverse backgrounds who have lived and studied the social identities they discuss, and thus they convey a depth of understanding of women’s experiences as “outsiders-within” (Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 6). In their roles as psychologists, these authors have knowledge of psychology as “insiders”; however, they also speak with the authority of “outsiders” who have experienced many of the challenges of the women they discuss. As a result, they are especially well-prepared to see diversity as manifested in interconnected structures of inequality and privilege that often remain invisible to those who have limited personal experience with injustice. Through illustrative case studies, they unveil power issues, reveal sources of women’s resilience, and provide ecologically sound recommendations for psychotherapy. A third contribution to transformation is supported by each chapter’s attention to social change practices and