

EXPLORING/TEACHING

THE
PSYCHOLOGY
OF
WOMEN

A MANUAL OF RESOURCES

Second Edition

Foreword by Jane Torrey

Michele A. Paludi

Exploring/Teaching the Psychology of Women

*A Manual of Resources,
Second Edition*

Michele A. Paludi

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Exploring/Teaching the Psychology of Women

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Michele A. Paludi, Editor

For my sisters, Rosalie and Lucille

Foreword

A manual of resources must, as this one does, contain many references to written and audio-visual materials along with lists of persons and organizations that can help. All these will be invaluable in designing and updating courses on the psychology of women as well as in tailoring them to the needs of particular kinds of students and institutions. But anyone who teaches women's studies is likely to find out early that a feminist agenda must go far beyond the subject matter of a course. Traditional academic methods such as lectures, recitations, films, and academic discussions are important, but they are certainly not enough in women's studies. In such a new field there are few established truths that are adequate in themselves to legitimate a course. Maher and Tetreault ("The Feminist Class," Basic Books, 1994), in their study of feminist teaching in many disciplines and institutions, have shown the potential value of the goals and methods suggested for psychology in Paludi's new edition. She has organized the second edition not around the extensive subject matter this time, but around the goals of feminist teaching and the methods required to achieve those goals.

The first goal of developing critical thinking, as Paludi points out, requires getting the student to "talk in the first person," an essential aspect of "arenas in which teachers and students fashion their voices rather than 'find' them" (Maher & Tetreault, p. 18). Paludi provides not only topics for possible discussions but suggestions for dealing with sensitive and emotional issues that may arise both within and between students, so that the experience may build or restore self-esteem and a sense of personal authority.

Paludi's second goal, that of integrating knowledge into life, elaborates the context in which critical thinking develops. She suggests, for example, different ways of using journal writing to bring individual lives to bear on each topic of the course and vice versa. Ideas for role playing exercises, discussion questions, and term papers expand the means of achieving integration. She describes a life-span perspective that could bring in both past and future experiences that raise students' questions. But the "integration" Paludi aims for is not limited to individual concerns. Suggestions for internships and organizations for social action can expand a student's comprehension of the origins of many seem-

ingly personal problems as well as some means of dealing with them.

The goal of multicultural learning requires still more of the kind of assistance a manual like this can give. The women who first began research in women's studies naturally began with the experiences of women like themselves, usually the white middle class that dominates all of scholarship. Psychological studies of "other" women, though increasing, are still fewer and harder to find, so that lists of resources become especially important. We must reexamine every dimension of the psychology of women, from research methodologies through life-cycle changes, sexuality, careers, health, even to violence against women.

However, there are other obstacles to the cultural expansion of learning. Every student belongs to and identifies with many different subdivisions of humanity other than the category of women. They are able-bodied or disabled, homosexual or heterosexual, white, black or some other color, speak one or another language, and belong to one or another ethnic group. The feelings and ideologies that divide people cannot be overcome by a traditional academic detachment from the subject matter. The classroom should become a cultural context in which students can learn to recognize and take into account their own positions in the multicultural matrix of society. Otherwise they cannot appreciate the positions of others and understand the differences among them. The experiential exercises, role playing, and methods of dealing with interpersonal sensitivities provided here will all be helpful. Nevertheless, the very sweep of information and suggestions contained in this volume will make clear to the user that her own creativity will be called upon daily to apply, integrate, and extend its contents.

Jane Torrey

Preface

I am very proud to have an opportunity to be writing the second edition of *Exploring/Teaching the Psychology of Women: A Manual of Resources*. The response to the first edition of this book was overwhelmingly positive. I received many phone calls and letters thanking me for compiling references, discussion questions, and resources for the psychology of women course. I especially received letters from graduate students who were assigned to teach the course for the first time and who wanted some “paper mentoring” to nurture them through the course. I thank you for all of your comments and suggestions for a revision of the book. I hope you will find this second edition as helpful as the first.

Since the publication of the first edition, I have left academia full time and started my own consulting firm in upstate New York that deals with education/training, policy development, grievance procedures development, and expert witness testimony in sexual harassment—both academic and workplace sexual harassment. Through this consulting work I have met hundreds of students, faculty, and administrators who have asked me to discuss feminist pedagogy, especially in the psychology curriculum. I have incorporated many of the issues they raised with me in this second edition.

In addition, I had the wonderful experience of collaborating with political scientist Joan Tronto on a grant Hunter College was involved in that was awarded to the National Women’s Studies Association. Through our participation in this grant, we better defined the learning goals of our women’s studies program at Hunter in the following areas: knowledge base, learning skills, feminist pedagogy, and personal growth (Paludi & Tronto, 1992).

My participation in this assessment of the women’s studies courses at Hunter encouraged me to revise this resource manual for teaching the psychology of women course. I divided this book into the following sections, representing the main goals I believe should be part of the psychology of women course: (1) critical thinking, (2) integration of knowledge, and (3) multiculturalism. Within each of these three sections I included the following pedagogical tools for faculty and classroom use: experiential exercises; role playing exercises; sample discussion/essay questions; sample audio-visual materials; suggestions for guest speak-

ers; organizations to be contacted regarding educational material and internships; suggested term paper topics; and related readings.

These pedagogical techniques are offered for the following topics typically discussed in the psychology of women course: Heritage of the Field of the Psychology of Women; Feminist and Sex-Fair Research Methodologies; Life-Cycle Developmental Psychology of Women; Therapeutic Approaches; Women and Sexuality; Women's Career Development; Women and Relationships; Women and Health; Communication Skills; Violence Against Women.

Finally, I have included information dealing with legislative action on several of the issues, e.g., domestic violence, sexual harassment, women's reproductive health. I acknowledge the support and encouragement of New York State Assemblymember James Tedisco, for whom I have been the Legislative Advisor on Women's Issues. I also acknowledge the guidance of Jacqueline Hawkins, Kim Greene, and Judith Avner, with whom I worked on Governor Mario Cuomo's Task Force on Sexual Harassment. The information I have learned from Jim, Jackie, Kim, and Judy that deals with legislative issues has been very valuable.

Reference

- Paludi, M. A., & Tronto, J. (1992). "Feminist education." In C. McTighe Musil (Ed.). *The Courage to Question: Women's Studies and Student Learning*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges.

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Part 1

Critical Thinking

1

Introduction

. . . women's studies opens up with questions, and so . . . that clicked for me. . . That's really the biggest difference in women's studies and any other courses I've taken. . . You question all the time, all the time.

—Paludi & Tronto

As this woman's account suggests, one goal of the women's studies courses, including the psychology of women course, is to help students to learn to think critically. This ability is empowering for students, especially for re-entry women students who may have been silenced in their life experiences as well as in other courses. Critical thinking skills permit women students to see themselves as capable of critical analysis, to incorporate statistical methodologies in their analyses, to possess sufficient knowledge and perspective to engage in substantive critical analyses.

In addition, critical thinking requires an opportunity for students, especially for women students, to talk in the first person; to place faith and value in their opinions and analyses. It also permits the instructor of the psychology of women course to surrender the role of sole expert. Critical thinking thus instills in students confidence and positive sense of self—two important outcomes that should be expected in the psychology of women course.

Encouraging critical thinking in the psychology of women course requires support and patience on the part of the faculty member. This newly acquired skill may not be welcomed, let alone invited, in other courses in the psychology major. When I have taught the psychology of women course in terms of a challenge to each course in the psychology curriculum, classes have become tense because of the problems students experienced with other faculty members who did not want to discuss issues such as lesbian relationships, nonsexist research methodologies, feminist revisions of Freudian theory, or androcentric biases in theories of moral reasoning and career development.

Students may become very discouraged that they cannot express themselves in other courses; a tension often results between exercising

their critical skills in the psychology of women course and repressing them elsewhere. As one woman who participated in a women's studies grant with me stated:

taking women's studies courses has a good effect and a bad effect for me . . . the good effect is bringing this awareness of diversity to you. . . . The bad effect is the resultant critique that you bring to your other classes. . . . You're almost forced to put these blinders on, you know, when you start looking at other materials . . . where you're expected to look at it in a traditional way, so . . . I find myself having two personalities here you know, the kind of analysis and freedom I have in women's studies courses and then the more narrow view I'm expected to take and I'm graded on in other courses. (Paludi & Tronto, 1992, p. 145)

I suggest that faculty deal up front with this tension students experience. Inviting students to share their experiences as well as solutions can be most empowering for the students. For men in the course, such discussions will be enlightening in that they may for the first time hear about women being silenced in the academy and how their newly acquired voice from participating in the psychology of women course gets them labeled as aggressive, nasty, militant, etc. These discussions provide an opportunity for discussing how differential evaluations are made about women and men behaving similarly.

I recommend sharing this important goal or aspect of the course, i.e., critical thinking of psychological research and theories, with faculty colleagues. They may be more tolerant of the students in their class who are questioning traditional psychological research that is presented to them. It may also be helpful to invite women's studies faculty—yourself included—to your class to share their own techniques for handling this tension. This is an excellent area for positive role models! Inviting students in your class to participate in a women's studies club will be beneficial; such participation will put them into contact with many students who can be a support system for dealing with tensions arising from opportunities to engage in critical thinking.

I have included the following pedagogical techniques for faculty to use in guiding students' critical thinking skills: discussion/essay questions, experiential exercises, analyzing popularly written books on women's lives, guest speakers, audio-visual material, and women's centers. Also included in this section are references for providing students with foundations for restructuring the psychology courses in their major. All of these pedagogical techniques are vehicles through which students in