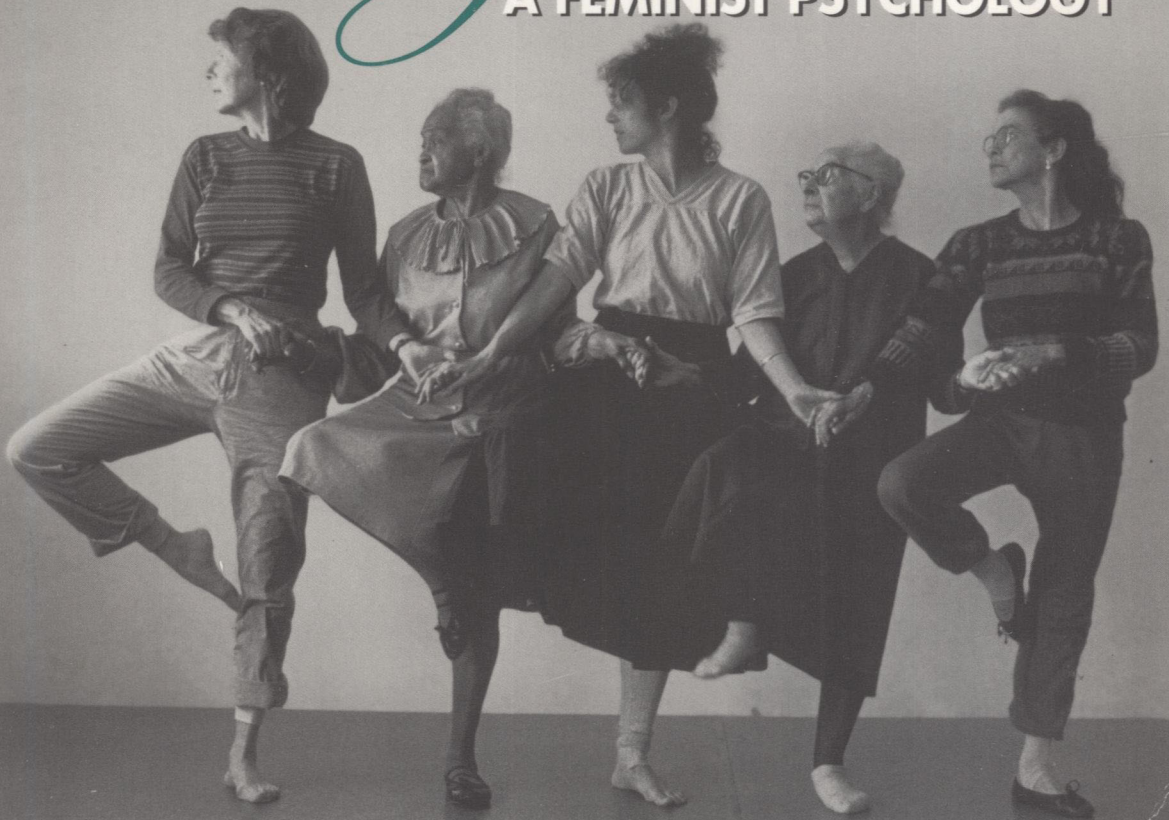


SECOND
EDITION

Women and Gender

A FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGY



RHODA UNGER AND MARY CRAWFORD

SECOND EDITION

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A FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGY

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Montclair State University

Mary Crawford

West Chester University of Pennsylvania

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A Feminist Psychology

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Women and Gender

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To our husbands
Burt Unger and Roger Chaffin
for always being there
and to our children:
Laurel and Rachel
Mary, Mark, and Ben
who represent our hopes
for the future.

Preface

The psychology of women and gender has changed a great deal since we completed work on the first edition of this book in 1991. The increasing abundance of scholarship and theory on women and gender, coming from women's studies, cultural studies, and the social sciences, is a source of wonder and delight to those of us who remember when there was virtually none. This new research has challenged old understandings and enriched our knowledge about the lives and experiences of girls and women.

We have changed, too. Since 1991, each of us has used the first edition of *Women and Gender* in graduate and undergraduate teaching: Rhoda Unger at Montclair State University, the University of British Columbia, and Brandeis University; Mary Crawford at West Chester University of Pennsylvania, Trenton State College, and the University of South Carolina. Our own sense of which parts of the book "worked" best and where it could use some "fine tuning" grew with the feedback from each new class. Instructors from diverse institutions ranging from community colleges to research universities shared their experiences of using the book in their classes, adding breadth to our ongoing evaluation.

Students from around the United States wrote to us to wholeheartedly thank us, passionately disagree with us, and offer their views on the issues. Some instructors (most notably, Judith Gibbons, Arnie Kahn, and Stephanie Riger) encouraged students to converse with us via e-mail, and these conversations proved at least as exciting and educational for us as for the students. The second edition of *Women and Gender*, then, is not just an update but a book enriched and deepened by a feminist process of dialogues between its authors and readers.

From early in our careers, we have defined ourselves as both psychologists and feminists. This combination of identities has been problematic at times, but it has also been an important source of energy and support. We wrote this book

to share our excitement about feminist psychology. This is not a book about sex differences, nor is it simply a compendium of psychological research. We believe that feminism provides theoretical frameworks into which present and future scholarship can be placed. In turn, psychological research can be used to further feminist goals of social change that benefit girls and women.

This book, like its preceding edition is explicitly feminist in its approach. We believe that knowledge can never be completely objective and value-free. Therefore, we have chosen to consider the political basis and implications of psychology's findings about women and gender.

We also believe that students should be exposed to a variety of perspectives and viewpoints. We try never to talk down or oversimplify research findings and social issues. Rather, we respect the intelligence of our student readers. Although feminist concepts will be new to many students, all are capable of reasoned analysis. Sometimes, we present a summary of the research on an issue, then leave the issue open and unresolved, so the reader may use informed judgment and make up her or his own mind. Feminism has nothing to fear from critical thinking!

Even more than in the first edition, *Women and Gender* is grounded in a social constructionist perspective. In other words, we view gender not as an attribute of individuals but as a system of meanings in which we are all immersed. Furthermore, we regard psychology not as an abstract, decontextualized search for "truth" but a human enterprise shaped by culture. The social constructionist stance opens the way to critical analysis of popular culture, mass media, and the like. It also encourages critical analysis of why psychology chooses favored research topics, how it views women as objects of analysis, and how it has treated the women in the profession, both historically and in the present.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

Four themes organize this book:

- *Gender is more than just sex.* Gender is a system of meanings related to power and status. It operates at individual, interactional, and cultural levels to structure people's lives. We examine phenomena from each of these levels—individual, internalized aspects such as gender identity and gender typing; interactional aspects such as stereotypes, attributions, and self-fulfilling prophecies; and cultural aspects such as media representations, laws and customs, and religious teachings.
- *Language and naming are a source of power.* Aspects of reality that are named become more visible, and aspects unnamed may be difficult to think about and analyze. Regaining for women the power to name aspects of reality is the first step in personal and social change. We analyze sex bias in naming and language use, both in ordinary language (e.g., the "generic he") and in the specialized language of psychological constructs (e.g., "premenstrual syndrome"). We also show how ongoing language change is making women and their experiences more visible. Thinking critically about language can increase understanding of how the gender system works and how it can be changed.

- *Women are a diverse group.* Perhaps the only appropriate response to a generalization about women is the question, “Which women?” Feminist scholars have become increasingly sensitive to the differences among women—in social class, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, and culture. Integrating diversity throughout each chapter of the book, we explore the ways that these differences affect women’s experiences, including gender socialization, adult relationships, and the experience of psychological distress and disorder. We also make use of a great deal of cross-cultural data, because they help broaden psychological knowledge from its largely white, North American, middle-class perspective. Moreover, cross-cultural data provide powerful examples of our first theme, that gender is more than just sex. Even phenomena thought to have a strong biological base, such as hermaphroditism, menarche, and menopause, are shaped by culture.
- *Psychology should be related to social change.* Our feminist perspective implies that there are limits to the power of individual change. Many of the problems that confront girls and women today are the result of social structures that disadvantage them. While changes in individual attitudes and behaviors, traditionally a focus of psychological research and practice, are necessary, they must be linked with changes in societies as a whole. Women may view social change as more critical than men do because they suffer more from the oppressive aspects of societal structures. However, no social problem is “just” a woman’s problem.

NEW IN THIS EDITION

New to this edition is a section headed “Connecting Themes.” Each chapter ends with a summary of how the four themes are played out in the topics and issues of that particular chapter. This allows students to trace the themes throughout the book and see their importance and relevance across a wide range of topics.

The new edition incorporates more information about the diversity of women into each chapter. It expands the multicultural perspective of the previous edition by adding new findings about the interactions of ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and social class at many points in women’s lives. It also pays more attention to the role of the media in defining and constructing girls and women of all ages. It continues and expands our concern with the *context* of women’s lives both on the institutional level (for example, in schools and at work) and the interpersonal level (by analyzing the nature and structures of groups and the gendered behaviors produced within them). Of course, this edition is updated, with hundreds of new references to recent research. It has more (and livelier) illustrations and tables. And, through a long process of revision and refinement, the text is *shorter* than the first edition!

New topics in this edition include coverage and analysis of the backlash against feminism (Chapter 1); the role of sexism in the schools (Chapters 3 and 8); media images of women athletes; the representation of women in rap and music videos (both in Chapter 4); pornography, race, and hostility toward

women (Chapters 4 and 14); factors influencing women's perception of their leadership abilities (Chapter 5); biological determinism in the media (Chapters 3 and 6); the "silencing" of adolescent girls (Chapter 8); differences among diverse groups of women in the meaning of sexuality and body image, and implications for therapeutic treatment (Chapters 9 and 15); the new reproductive technology and the medical, legal, and ethical issues it raises; woman-headed households; and socially created obstacles to mothering (all in Chapter 11); a new synthesis of the costs and benefits of juggling work, family, and relationship roles (Chapter 12); changing cultural views of menopause; and achievement in mid- and later life (both in Chapter 13).

Those who have used the first edition will also note expanded discussion of other topics, including cultural diversity and personality (Chapter 2); media portrayals of women (Chapters 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 13); and cognitive mechanisms that maintain sexism (Chapters 3 and 5). Timely topics such as the "glass ceiling," the "mommy track," the politics of premenstrual syndrome, and the reported existence of a "gay gene" are introduced as well.

USING THIS BOOK

Women and Gender contains a great deal of information and a sophisticated analysis of the field. However, as the wide adoption of the first edition at very diverse institutions shows, it is an accessible text. It can be read by people who have the equivalent of one course in psychology and no previous exposure to women's studies. Students find the wealth of women's own accounts of their experiences compelling. And they like the touches of humor that lighten serious issues.

The book can be used in either a chronological developmental sequence, in social/personality/clinical clusters, or in groupings of topical issues. Each chapter can stand as a unit by itself, allowing maximum flexibility in combining them. Chapters 3, 6–8, 10, 11 and 13 have a developmental approach that covers the lifespan. Chapters 4, 5, and 12 are social psychologically oriented, and Chapters 2, 9, 14, and 15 form a clinical/personality cluster.

The Instructor's Manual for the new edition, by Mykol Hamilton, Amanda Durik, and Mary Crawford, is greatly expanded. It contains many more test items (multiple choice, short-answer, and essay), current film and video listings, new classroom demonstrations and other techniques for stimulating active involvement, sample syllabi, suggestions for using the internet and the worldwide web, course evaluation forms, and much more. We are grateful to Mykol and Amanda for taking on this sizeable task. Their superb work on the manual has made our commitment to fostering excellent teaching a reality.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Like the previous edition, this book came about only because of the efforts of a large number of colleagues and friends. Most notable are Jackie White, Patricia Donat, and Barrie Bondurant, who contributed a compelling chapter on vio-

lence against girls and women to both editions. We are grateful to have their expertise and analysis on this vitally important topic.

We thank Lori Fitton, ace graduate assistant, for her help with references, illustrations, and manuscript preparation. Special thanks go to our editors at McGraw-Hill, Jane Vaicunas and Beth Kaufman, along with senior editing supervisor Fred Burns and photo editor Anne Manning. Their special brand of persistent patience got us through to the end; if we weren't exactly relaxed, at least we remained reasonably sane and (almost) on schedule.

We wish to thank all the students who read the first edition and responded to it in our classes, and the instructors and students around the United States and Canada who so generously gave us feedback on it. We thank, too, the reviewers for the second edition: Marlene Adelman, Norwalk Community Technical College; William B. Dragoin, Georgia Southwestern College; Karen G. Howe, Trenton State College; Korrel Kanoy, Peace College; Pat Lefler, Lexington Community College; Toby Silverman, William Patterson College of New Jersey; and Doris J. Wright, Georgia State University.

We consider this book to be truly a collaborative effort. Our families have only to read the dedication to know how important their contributions have been. Our colleagues, students and friends, too, should know that this book would not exist without your warm cooperation, insights, and support.

Rhoda Unger
Mary Crawford

Women and Gender

A Feminist Psychology

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Introduction to a Feminist Psychology of Women

BEGINNINGS

The Emergence of a Field
Voices from the Margins: A History
Feminist Perspectives
The Backlash Against Feminism

METHODS AND VALUES IN SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY

Nonsexist Research
Feminist Values in Research

THEMES OF THIS BOOK

Gender: More Than Just Sex
Language and the Power to Name
The Diversity of Women
Psychological Research and Social Change

OUR GOALS FOR OUR STUDENTS

SUGGESTED READINGS

BEGINNINGS

The Emergence of a Field

During the past thirty years, the science and practice of psychology have undergone a critical evaluation more intense and sustained than at any other time in their history. Here are a few of the critical voices:

Carolyn Sherif, 1964: Ignorance about women pervades academic disciplines in higher education, where the requirements for the degree seldom include thoughtful inquiry into the status of women, as part of the total human condition (cited in Sherif, 1979, p. 93).

Mary Parlee, 1975: The academic discipline (of psychology) . . . has distorted facts, omitted problems, and perpetuated pseudoscientific data relevant to women. Until recently, the body of "knowledge" developed by academic psychologists happened (apparently) to support stereotyped beliefs about the abilities and psychological characteristics of women and men, and such beliefs happen to support existing political, legal, and economic inequalities between the sexes (p. 124).

Kathleen Grady, 1981: The promise of science cannot be realized if . . . certain questions are never asked, or they are asked of the wrong people and in the

wrong way, or they are not published because they do not fit accepted theories (p. 629).

Michelle Fine, 1985: Women who represent racial and ethnic minorities, working-class and poor women, and disabled women and lesbians, need to be involved in [psychological] research. The lives of these women need to be integrated into this literature, and the assumptions of psychological theories based on white middle-class experiences and beliefs that all persons are (should be?) heterosexual and nondisabled must be challenged (p. 178).

Rachel Hare-Mustin and Jeanne Marecek, 1990: We find it curious that psychological thought is still heavily influenced by such nineteenth-century theorists as Darwin, Marx, and Freud. As products of their era, they were primarily supportive of the status quo, of upper-class white male privilege with its limited knowledge of and marginal concern for women. If they were alive today, they would be astonished: What? You are still using those old books? Throw them away (p. 189).

And Naomi Weisstein (1968), in a now-classic paper titled "Psychology Constructs the Female," declared that psychology had nothing to say about what women are really like, what they need, and what they want because psychology did not know.

Moved by critical analyses of its limitations, the field of psychology began to examine the stereotypical thinking and sex bias that had characterized its knowledge about women. The more closely psychologists began to look at the ways psychology had thought about women, the more problems and inadequacies they saw. These have been summarized by Arnold Kahn and Paula Jean (1983):

There was widespread agreement about [psychology's] faults: that women were infrequently studied; that theories were constructed from a male-as-normative viewpoint and that women's behavior was explained as deviation from the male standard; that the stereotype of women was considered an accurate portrayal of women's behavior; that women who fulfilled the dictates of the gender stereotype were viewed as healthy and happy; that differences in the behaviors of women and men were attributed to differences in anatomy and physiology; and that the social context which often shapes behavior was ignored in the case of women (p. 660).

Psychologists had begun to realize that psychological knowledge about women was *androcentric*, or male-centered. They began to rethink psychological concepts and methods and to produce new research with women as the focus of study. Moreover, they began to study topics of importance and concern to women and to develop ways of analyzing social relations between women and men. As a result, psychology has developed new ways of thinking about women, expanded its research methods, and developed new approaches to therapy and counseling.

The new psychology of women and gender is rich and varied. Virtually every intellectual framework from Freudian theory to cognitive psychology has been used in developing new theories and approaches, and virtually every area of psychology, from developmental to social, has been affected (Crawford &

Marecek, 1989). This book is an invitation to explore the knowledge and participate in the ongoing debates of psychology's reconstruction of the female.

The growth of the field can be seen in the number of psychology departments offering courses in the psychology of women or gender. Before 1968, there was virtually none. A recent survey that received responses from 503 psychology departments found that 51 percent listed undergraduate courses in the psychology of women. One hundred and seventy-two such courses are currently being taught at the graduate level in colleges and universities in the United States (Women's Programs Office, 1991). Psychology of women courses are often connected to, and have contributed to, the rapid growth of women's studies programs, which began about 1970. Only twenty years later, in 1990, the National Women's Studies Association reported 623 women's studies programs in the United States.

The new field has its own journals focusing on the psychology of women or gender: for example, *Sex Roles*, which began publishing in 1975; *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, published since 1977; and *Feminism & Psychology*, a recent addition from England. Psychological research on women and gender is also published in other psychology journals—such as *American Psychologist*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and *Developmental Psychology*—and in such interdisciplinary women's studies journals as *Signs: The Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *International Journal of Women's Studies*, and *Feminist Studies*.

The emergence of interest in women and gender took place in a social context of changing roles for women and the emergence of a feminist social movement in the late 1960s. Questioning psychology's representation of women was very much part of the more general questioning of "women's place" encouraged and led by women's liberation activists.

The women's movement of this era was not the first. A previous women's rights movement had reached its peak over a hundred years earlier with the Seneca Falls Declaration of 1848, which explicitly rejected the doctrine of female inferiority then taught by academics and clergy (Harris, 1984). However, the women's movement lost momentum in the 1920s, after women had won the vote, and psychology's interest in sex differences and gender waned. The area would not be a major part of psychology's research agenda until a social context of feminist activism again arose.

With the rebirth of the women's movement in the 1960s and with widespread voicing of feminist concerns once again a social force, researchers again became interested in the study of women and gender. Women psychologists and men who supported their goals also began to work toward an improved status for women within the field of psychology. They first formed the Association for Women in Psychology (AWP) in 1969, then lobbied the American Psychological Association (APA) to form a Division of the Psychology of Women. This division, officially approved in 1973, is now one of the larger divisions of APA, with more than 6,000 members. (Divisions on ethnic minority and gay/lesbian issues were established later.) Progress in incorporating women has also occurred among Canadian psychologists (Parlee, 1985) and, more recently, within the British Psychological Society. These organizational changes have acknowledged the presence of women in psychology and helped enhance

their professional identity (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). And none too soon—women now earn 60 percent of Ph.D.s awarded in psychology (Trends in Education, 1995).

Voices from the Margins: A History

Throughout the history of psychology, there had been criticism of psychology's treatment of women and people of color, most often voiced by members of those groups. As early as 1876, Mary Putman Jacobi had completed a Harvard dissertation challenging the idea that women required special mental and bodily rest during menstruation, noting that

An inquiry into the limits of activity and attainments that may be imposed by sex is very frequently carried on in the same spirit as that which hastens to ascribe to permanent differences in race all the peculiarities of a class, and this because the sex that is supposed to be limiting in its nature, is nearly always different from that of the person conducting the inquiry (cited in Sherif, 1979, p. 95).

Robert Guthrie's book *Even the Rat Was White* (Guthrie, 1976) has examined the history of racism in psychology and anthropology and documented the contributions of early African-American and Mexican-American psychologists in providing less biased views of human nature. In the early 1900s, some of the first scientifically trained women devoted much research effort to challenging accepted wisdom about the extent and nature of sex differences. Helen Thompson Wooley conducted the first experimental laboratory study of sex differences in mental traits, using a variety of innovative measures. In interpreting her results, she stressed the overall similarity of the sexes and the environmental determinants of observed differences, remarking daringly in a 1910 *Psychological Bulletin* article that "There is perhaps no field aspiring to be scientific where flagrant personal bias, logic martyred in the cause of supporting a prejudice, unfounded assertions, and even sentimental rot and drivel, have run riot to such an extent as here" (Wooley, 1910, p. 340). Among the women inspired by her work was Leta Stetter Hollingworth, who challenged the Darwinian view that women are innately less variable (and therefore less likely to be highly creative or intelligent) (Shields, 1982).

The work of a few early women psychologists opened the way for critical empirical research to replace unexamined assumptions about women's "natural" limitations (Rosenberg, 1982). Determined to demonstrate women's capacity to contribute to modern science on an equal basis with men, they chose to measure sex differences in order to challenge beliefs about women's limitations. In a sense, their research interests were dictated by questions chosen by others. Faced with the necessity of proving their very right to do research, these women labored to refute hypotheses that they themselves did not find credible and that they did not believe could account for the inferior social position of women (Unger, 1979a). Moreover, they worked in a social context that denied them opportunities because of their sex and forced them to make cruel choices between work and family relationships (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). Their story is one,