

THE ORIGINS AND ACTIVITIES OF APA'S DIVISION OF THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WOMEN

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The activities of APA's Division of the Psychology of Women are traced from the origins of the Division in 1973 to the present. Division 35 evolved in response to pressures relating to the status of women in psychology as well as concerns about the content and practice of the psychology of women. The Division has fostered significant research on the psychology of women, been an important organizing base for women psychologists in their quest for visibility and influence, and provided institutional support for issues of diversity in psychology and society.

The Division of the Psychology of Women (Division 35) of the American Psychological Association (APA) is the 12th largest division of that organization, with 2,374 members in 1991 (American Psychological Association, 1991). Division 35 was established in 1973 after APA's Council of Representatives voted to approve the petition to establish the division. The goals of Division 35 are reflected in the original statement of purpose: "to promote the research and the study of women[;] . . . to encourage the integration of this information about women with the current psychological knowledge and beliefs in order to apply the gained knowledge to the society and its institutions" (American Psychological Association, Division of the Psychology of Women, 1989, p. 1).

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The Division's primary focus was thus to foster and nurture the growth of a feminist psychology of women and to create a knowledge base relevant to women's lives. While much of the Division's work has focused on the development and application of feminist knowledge, it has also involved the politics and empowerment of women in psychology.

In 1970, in response to pressure from the newly formed Association for Women in Psychology (AWP) (Tiefer, 1991), APA appointed a Task Force on the Status of Women in Psychology, chaired by Helen S. Astin, to develop a position paper on the status of women in psychology. The task force documented the disadvantaged status of women psychologists. In the report of its 2-year study, the task force recommended that inequities within the field be redressed in order to "ensure that women would be accepted as fully enfranchised members of the profession" (American Psychological Association, Task Force on the Status of Women in Psychology, 1973, p. 611). Among the inequities identified by the task force were deficiencies in psychological knowledge about women. In order to address these deficiencies, the task force recommended that a division be established.

Helen Astin, former chair of the task force, began the process by calling on Nancy Anderson to take the steps needed to petition APA to create a division that would foster research on the psychology of women (Astin, personal communication, 1991). Anderson began by obtaining the designated number of potential members required by the APA petition process (Anderson, personal communication, November 19, 1990).

According to Anderson, there was much skepticism and subtle resistance to the idea in the APA central office. Anderson's mailing to potentially interested members was successful, however. As Elizabeth Douvan (the first president of the Division), stated in the first divisional newsletter, "some 800 APA members indicated an interest in joining such a division" (Douvan, 1974, p. 1). The petition for a Division of the Psychology of Women (Division 35) was brought before APA's Council of Representatives at its 1973 annual meeting in Montreal. The lively discussion included concerns about "ghettos" and "segregation." Nonetheless, the petition for the Division was formally approved. This approval sharply contrasted with previous efforts of women to become separate entities within organized psychology (Walsh, 1985).

ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

The Division provided an important organizing base for women psychologists in the quest for visibility and influence. Because of their strong commitment to the division's existence and survival, many members were willing and eager to devote an enormous amount of time, effort, and enthusiasm to various projects.¹

Clearly, the work of the division was not without controversy and conflict; the establishment of any new organization presupposes internal struggles over self-definition and purpose. For instance, there were many discussions about the implications of the name and the Division's stated goals; some members expressed strong discomfort, but there was little acrimony (M. Wittig, personal communication, 1990); there was much debate, some of it published in feminist publications, over the use of the term "psychology of women" (Mednick, 1976; Parlee, 1975). The debate continues and reflects both pragmatic political strategy as well as epistemological questions about the nature of the search for feminist knowledge. Concern over truth in labeling did not, however, impede the work of the Division, which proceeded on a base of enormous feminist energy on many fronts.

Controversy about structure was short-lived. Division 35, in contrast to AWP, established a hierarchical structure directed by a board of elected officers. From the beginning, board meetings were conducted in a traditional style, with rules of order but with encouragement of openness and an egalitarian attitude. There has continued to be a strong effort to maintain accessibility for all members in the nomination and election processes with an open nominations process conducted through the newsletter. This mixed style of structure was adopted both as a statement of philosophy and as a matter of pragmatism. The Division has tried to foster a nonauthoritarian, participatory style of functioning and decision-making; to the extent that it has succeeded, there have been numerous long meetings.

Fears of being "co-opted" by being an official APA division were initially expressed, but the only way to totally avoid such an outcome would be not to work from within the APA structure in order to affect change. However, a significant proportion of the membership and the leadership, even those who were AWP members, wanted to have a feminist organization situated within APA. Freeman's (1983) analysis of the women's movement, which suggests that the older and younger parts of the movement pursued different goals and used different methods, seems applicable here. These differences can be understood in the context of the women's diverse backgrounds. One faction of women represented those whose political and intellectual socialization was in the civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1960s, in contrast to those whose previous experience was within legal, governmental, or political systems.

These differences in background were also found among the early activists of Division 35. However, it was reform rather than revolution that was in the minds of the charter organizers of the Division. There was a conscious choice to be part of APA and to attempt to reform the organization from within while maintaining strong ties and collaboration with an independent AWP. An overlap of membership and function with AWP has evolved, and the Division continues to collaborate formally with AWP

Table 1.
Presidents of Division 35

1991–1992	Pamela Trotman Reid
1990–1991	Bernice Lott
1989–1990	Lenore Walker
1988–1989	Nancy Felipe Russo
1987–1988	Ellen Kimmel
1986–1987	Virginia E. O’Leary
1985–1986	Jacquelynne Eccles
1984–1985	Hannah Lerman
1983–1984	Irene Hanson Frieze
1982–1983	Mary Brown Parlee
1981–1982	Michele A. Wittig
1980–1981	Rhoda K. Unger
1979–1980	Carolyn Wood Sherif
1978–1979	Barbara Strudler Wallston
1977–1978	Annette M. Brodsky
1976–1977	Martha T. Mednick
1975–1976	Florence L. Denmark
1974–1975	Helen S. Astin
1973–1974	Elizabeth Douvan

on projects, including a joint student research prize and a hospitality suite at the APA annual convention (see Tiefer, 1991).

DEVELOPMENT AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Division immediately moved to become a presence and a power within organized psychology. A pro-tem Executive Board began planning a feminist agenda. The initial pro-tem officers were Elizabeth Douvan (president), Helen Astin (president-elect), Lorraine Eyde (secretary-treasurer), Florence Denmark (program chair), Barbara Strudler Wallston (elections chair), and Rhoda Unger (membership chair). The Division began with 804 charter members; 161 members and 59 associate members were added during its first year (American Psychological Association, Division of the Psychology of Women, 1974). See Table 1 for a list of Division presidents.

The first year was one of landmark accomplishments. The Division quickly moved to build solidarity through communication with its members via a newsletter, which was first edited by Tena Cummings and Nancy Anderson. The newsletter, published four times a year, provided a medium for a president’s message, feedback on actions at meetings, calls for nominations, highlights of the convention program, and information

on a myriad of feminist events, activities, and materials in and outside the discipline.

Divisional status brought several institutional benefits, including the power to sponsor a journal, program time at APA's annual meeting, representation on APA's Council of Representatives, and the right to confer honors and awards. The value of such enlarged visibility cannot be overestimated.

Psychology of Women Quarterly

The Division swiftly took the step most critical to legitimizing research in the field: establishing a peer-reviewed journal. The board voted to establish the *Psychology of Women Quarterly* (PWQ) in 1973, with Georgia Babladelis as the first editor (1975–1980). The first volume to be published was in fall 1976. Through the sustained efforts of the PWQ editorial board, the support of the Division's Executive Committee, and the willingness of top scholars in the field to publish their work in the journal, PWQ has become a respected vehicle for the publication of feminist theory and research. Other PWQ editors include Nancy Henley (1980–1985), Janet Shibley Hyde (1985–1989), and Judith Worell (1989–1994).

The Convention Program

Impressive convention programs were developed from the start. These programs "brought women together, and . . . provided a place for exchange of ideas. [Division 35] programs have attracted large audiences and other divisions have been eager for our co-sponsorship" (Mednick, 1978, p. 129). Evidence of the quality of the convention program and the enthusiasm it generated is seen in the dramatic increases in program time allotted to the Division. That allotment is dependent on attendance at the previous year's convention. Allotted program time jumped from an initial 15 hours in 1974 to 31 hours in 1977. Over the years it has continued to increase, and in 1991 the allotted time, including all sessions, was 44 hours.

Division 35 fostered a number of creative program innovations. In 1978 Division 35 initiated the Open Symposium, which was "designed to provide an innovative participative structure for . . . presentation of research. All those who submit . . . will be able to present" (Mednick, 1977, p. 1). A report on the symposium held at the APA meetings in 1979 showed it to be enormously popular (Major, 1979). The Division also used its social hours to celebrate the achievements of its members and express appreciation for Division service in a variety of ways, such as plaques and, occasionally, creative feminist songs.

APA's Council of Representatives

An APA apportionment vote resulted in four Division 35 representatives on the APA Council of Representatives, APA's policy-making body. This number rivaled the voting blocs of well-established divisions. The Division's first Council Representatives were Nancy Anderson, Georgia Babladelis, Annette Brodsky, and Hannah Lerman. They immediately moved to work with women from other divisions to establish a Women's Caucus of the APA Council. Since the Council is the body that elects the membership of APA Boards and Continuing Committees as well as determines APA policies, an effective Women's Caucus was a prerequisite for increasing women's participation in APA. It is easy to lose sight of how radical this move was when we look at the strong Women's Caucus on APA Council in 1991. The firmly established Women's Caucus belies its revolutionary beginnings. In 1974, when the first caucus meeting was called by Division 35 representatives, it was held in secret; some women attended but others refused to do so.

Honors and Awards

In order to recognize important contributions to the psychology of women, the Division nominates members for APA Fellow status and makes a number of awards (American Psychological Association, Division of the Psychology of Women, 1989). As of 1991, 156 of the Division's 2,374 members had been elected to Fellow status in recognition of their sustained and outstanding contributions to the field.

In 1984, the Carolyn Wood Sherif Memorial Lecturership Award was established to commemorate the contributions of an important feminist leader, renowned social psychologist, and Division 35 president (Mednick & Russo, 1983). The Research Award on Psychotherapeutic Interventions with Women, established in 1985, is supported by the royalties from *Women and Psychotherapy*, a compilation of research presented at an APA-NIMH conference coordinated through APA's Women's Programs Office by Nancy Felipe Russo and edited by Annette Brodsky and Rachel Hare-Mustin. A Student Research Prize, cosponsored by AWP, recognizes outstanding student research on women and gender roles.

The Barbara Strudler Wallston Award for the Representation of Underrepresented Groups in the Publication Process has been developed to recognize journals that show the most progress in this area. It was established in 1988 in memory of Wallston, for whom this issue was of critical importance (American Psychological Association, Division of the Psychology of Women, 1989).

The newest awards are five Heritage Awards, which were established as

a result of the recommendation of the Task Force on History to recognize sustained and outstanding contributions in the areas of research, publication, practice, policy, and APA service. Two of these awards, Research and Publication, were given for the first time in 1991 (O'Connell, 1990).

Substantive Areas

The Division also immediately launched numerous task forces and committees in substantive areas. Over the years these task forces and committees reflected the multifaceted concerns of the division and became the concrete application of the division's mission statement: to expand and apply psychological knowledge to empower women.

Research. A series of division bodies have focused on the lack of research on women, the treatment of women within research projects, how women researchers themselves were treated, and sex bias in research. In 1974, President Helen Astin (Mednick, 1978) created the first ad hoc committee on research concerns. This committee focused on ethics and suggested feminist ethical guidelines for research to APA. Among its recommendations were the development of support networks for women involved in research, requests for more program time at APA conventions for presenting research on the psychology of women, the elimination of sex discrimination, and assistance networks to provide grant application strategies (Sachs & Vaughter, 1976). This committee's work resulted in a report, *Setting Priorities in Research for Women* (Crull, 1976), which elaborated substantive issues and recommended a "clearinghouse for women in research" (p. 6). In 1977, a report from the Task Force on Women Doing Research reviewed gender-specific barriers to research in psychology. The task force pointed out the importance of providing female role models to aid in the acculturation of women into nontraditional occupational roles (O'Connell et al., 1978).

The concerns with research have taken diverse forms; a report assessing research needs appeared in 1980. It emerged from a concern with looking for the frontiers and was prompted by a restless feeling about where the psychology of women was proceeding and the inadequate growth of theory. A tangible outcome of the Division's concern with research issues are the Guidelines for Nonsexist Research (McHugh, Koeske, & Frieze, 1986), which were widely read and which stimulated APA's own task force in the area (Denmark, Russo, Frieze, & Sechzer, 1988).

Changing issues in the conduct of research and controversies about feminist methods were reflected in the naming of a Task Force on Feminist Research and Epistemology in 1988, which was chaired by Mary Crawford. That task force organized a well-attended convention program and published an important bibliography (Crawford & Marecek, 1989).

Practice. Another series of task forces have focused on issues related to clinical treatment and practice. One of the products of this work was a widely distributed consumer handbook on women and psychotherapy that was a joint effort with AWP (Liss-Levinson et al., 1985). Another contribution of professional psychologists to the Division was the formation of a Section on Feminist Professional Training and Practice, which was passed by the Executive Committee in 1988 and which, by Division bylaw vote, replaced the Division's Committee on Clinical Training and Practice in 1990.

Other task force topics have ranged from concerns of women over 40, lesbian issues, MA psychologists, affirmative action, mentoring, sexual harassment, reproductive freedom, and the Equal Rights Amendment to teaching and curriculum issues. Several of them have also been important power bases for women concerned with ethnic minority issues.

Ethnic Minority Issues

Individual women of color have participated and contributed to the establishment of Division 35 from its beginnings. In 1976, however, the concerns of women of color began to be institutionalized in the Division's formal structure when Division president Martha Mednick asked Saundra Rice Murray (aka Nettles) to organize a task force on Black Women's Priorities.

The task force undertook a variety of activities. It began a bibliography of research on black women, and specific APA programs were developed to address the concerns of women of color. Increased involvement of black women in APA governance was also stressed. Among their recommendations to the Executive Board was the proposal to establish a standing committee on black women's concerns. The task force believed that such a committee would provide evidence of Division commitment to black women and their concerns and would enhance their work. There was considerable discussion and controversy, which included expressions of concern about the precedent of establishing for the first time a substantive committee. Nonetheless, the recommendation was passed and the proposed change in the division's bylaws was approved by the membership.

The Committee on Black Women's Concerns formally began in 1978 with Pamela Trotman Reid as chair. A first in the profession, it was extremely effective. Building on the work of the task force, the bibliography was expanded and new convention programs were organized. A directory titled *Black Women in Psychology* was assembled for publication by the APA's Women's Program Office. Subsequent chairs include Gwendolyn Puryear (aka Keita, 1980–1982), and Vickie Mays (1982–1984).

In 1984, the committee was replaced by a Section on the Psychology of

Black Women. As stated in the Division 35 bylaws: "The section shall have as specific goals to increase the scientific understanding of those aspects of culture and class which pertain to the psychology of Black women, and to increase the quality of education and training in the psychology of Black women" (American Psychological Association, Division of the Psychology of Women, 1989, p. 18). Chairs of the section have included Vickie Mays (1984–1986), Saundra Rice (Murray) Nettles (1986–1988), Peggy Carr (1988–1990), and Veronica Thomas (1990–1991). The section is extremely active, and in recent years has developed its own award programs, expanded its convention programming, and held dances during the APA annual convention in support of social causes such as to help students from South Africa, fund AIDS research, and support the pro-choice movement.

In 1977, a Task Force on the Concerns of Hispanic Women was appointed, chaired by Martha Bernal. Under the leadership of Hortensia Amaro, the initial task force roster became a full-fledged *Directory of Hispanic Women in Psychology*, which was published by APA's Women's Programs Office. An annotated bibliography on psychological research on Hispanic women was also developed.

The task force organized a formal communication network to explore the unique stresses experienced by Hispanic women psychologists and organized annual sessions on Hispanic women's issues at the APA convention. Subsequent task force chairs have included Margarita García (1978–1980), Oliva Espín (1980–1982), and Hortensia Amaro (1982–1986). The task force became a standing Committee in 1986, with Angela Ginorio as chair, followed by Mimi Acosta.

Although painfully cognizant of the persistent gap between its reality and its ideals (Comas-Díaz, 1991), the Division has been at the forefront in working to make the psychology of women a field that reflects diversity. Division members were well aware of "the parallels between racism and sexism" and were committed to the concerns of minority women (Wallston, 1979, p. 1). In addition to the section on the Psychology of Black Women and the standing committee on the Concerns of Hispanic Women, there have been task forces addressing the concerns of Asian-American Women and Native American Women (Comas-Díaz, 1991). In 1985 the Division established an ethnic minority slate for Council representative in order to assure that at least one member of Council would be an ethnic minority (Reid, 1985). This practice continues.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Although some members eschewed politics as a divisional objective, politics soon came to the fore (Mednick, 1978). In 1977, the Division sponsored a resolution that APA should avoid holding its annual convention in

states that had not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This resolution passed despite considerable opposition, and involved canceling conventions in Atlanta, Las Vegas, and New Orleans (American Psychological Association, Division of Psychology of Women, 1977). The division has also been an important advocate for APA resolutions on reproductive choice (Travis, Gressley, & Crumpler, 1991).

Another conflict, or at least an intense discussion, was about feminism itself. The Division was clearly feminist: "The goals of expanding knowledge about women, legitimizing the field, and revising our discipline can only be achieved by an understanding of the sexism that is the basis of the exclusion and devaluation of all that is feminine" (Mednick, 1978, p. 134). At that time, perceptions of the Division ranged from a hotbed of "radical feminists" to a too cautious, conservative, establishment group. In any event, Division activists were pushing for feminist models and the discussion continued. For example, Wallston's presidential address (1979) discussed in a thoughtful and complex manner the issue of feminist methodology. Whether such methodology is needed, or possible, continues to be discussed.

There were difficult contradictions. Perhaps the desires were irreconcilable; on the one hand, to be feminist and nonelitist and to creatively restructure the discipline, and on the other hand, to advance and attain status within the profession. This clash was exemplified in ambivalence about Fellow status, which involved the effort to reconcile a desire to change the discipline contrasted with the wish to be part of its structure and to confer the status of Fellow as a recognition of women and of feminist contributions to the field.

Some members found great strength and support from the association with women, while others worried that more men were not involved. Men have ranged from about 4 to 8% of the membership, and one man, Arnold Kahn, served in elected office (secretary-treasurer, 1977-1980). However, the issue of segregation or separatism involves more than whether men are involved in the Division. It concerns effectiveness in spreading feminist knowledge. The task of building the Division has been two-pronged; to develop the field and also to push for integration of feminist knowledge into every part of the discipline (Mednick, 1977). Wallston (1979) reiterated and expanded on this view:

Since science is and cannot be value free the political arguments are also important. If you believe integration of psychology of women is the answer, how can it be effected? That takes a power base. A separate psychology of women seems the only viable means to such power. Trying to attain power in a variety of areas without the base will dilute energy to too great a degree and therefore, is not likely to be effective. Therefore I am arguing that a certain amount of separatism is necessary . . . but it must not . . . ignore the rest of psychology. (p. 1)

Division 35 evolved in response to pressures relating to the status of women in the profession as well as concerns about both the content and practice of the psychology of women. Early treatises had been very critical of how psychology had studied women. Research and discussion that appeared during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Horner, 1972; Mednick & Tangri, 1972) indicated that revision and more research were very much in order.

The premise and promise of Division 35 has been fulfilled in the scholarly work revising the history of psychology and enlightening the field about how women have been treated (see, e.g., Furumoto, 1988; Furumoto & Scarborough, 1986; O'Connell & Russo, 1980, 1983, 1988, 1990), about resistance to earlier efforts to organize (Walsh, 1985), and about how women have been studied. Some of these issues are still with us, though in muted form and in an extremely different social context. As Sherif (1979) noted:

Division 35 was formed on the cresting women's movement whose aims are economic, political and social equality. Emboldened to speak out by that historical context, we have continued to gain through the activity of that movement. Whether we were active in it from the Division's beginning, or became parts, or still prefer to regard ourselves as separate, the Division's existence and future are inseparably linked with it. (p. 3)

These words are still a guide.

NOTE

1. I cannot remember anyone turning down a request for assistance when I was president. As a respondent to a questionnaire I circulated last summer recalled, "I remember most vividly the keen sense of purpose and the high calibre of discussion among members of the executive committee (which was and still is very broadly defined and open)"—Martha Mednick.

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