Feminism and the decade of behavior

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Abstract:

This *Psychology of Women Quarterly* special issue argues that the goals of the Decade of Behavior to foster a healthier, safer, better educated, more prosperous, and more democratic nation cannot be achieved without contributions from feminist psychology. Its individual articles reflect feminist perspectives and provide examples of how feminist perspectives can inform behavioral and social research within Decade domains. In this overview, we outline the challenges that gender poses to achieving Decade goals, and discuss four cross-cutting feminist principles for research to address those challenges: Inclusiveness and Diversity, Context, Power and Privilege, and Activism. We discuss specific limitations of traditional research, and emphasize the need for new models that view the world in more complex, context-based ways. We underscore the importance of generating new, diversity-mindful research questions and of developing and accepting new methods to answer them. We discuss policy implications, stressing the need for activism. We hope this work will encourage the expansion of feminist scholarship in the new millennium and be helpful to researchers, educators, and policymakers in working to achieve the goals of the Decade of Behavior.

Keywords: Decade of Behavior | feminism | psychology | feminist psychology | activism

Article:[*]

In recent years, an explosion of new engineering technologies has launched a global Internet; at the same time, research in molecular biology is unlocking the human genome. However, goals for safety, education, health, democracy, and economic productivity continue to elude the nation.

Why? A major reason is because the roots of our problems lie in human behavior, and there is insufficient knowledge about the factors that influence human behavior in its various contexts.

The Decade of Behavior was envisioned with the conviction that behavioral science should play a central role in developing solutions for problems of national significance. It is modeled in part on the national program known as the Decade of the Brain (Ackerman, 1992). Sponsoring organizations are the American Psychological Association and an extensive list of other organizations.[1] In keeping with the finest traditions of science in the public interest, the goals of the Decade of Behavior are to foster a safer, better educated, healthier, more democratic, and more prosperous nation (McCarty, 1998). It is based on the recognition that solutions to these and other national problems require knowledge derived from behavioral and social science research. It is hoped that the Decade of Behavior will generate a focus on behavioral and social science approaches to persistent problems that have limited the realization of these goals. A Decade of Behavior, much like the Decade of the Brain, should promote increased research, training, and applications derived from behavioral and social science. A further goal is "to increase the general public's knowledge about and appreciation of the behavioral and social sciences" (Science Directorate, 1999, p. 9). Solutions to problems of safety, education, health, democracy and economic prosperity will require new research questions, new methodologies, new theory, and new applications. The work cannot be left to the perseverance of a few isolated scholars. Making systematic advances will require a comprehensive effort.

The premise of this special issue of the *Psychology of Women Quarterly* is that feminist psychology is critical to accomplishing the goals of the Decade of Behavior. In fact, we propose that the goals of the Decade of Behavior cannot be achieved without feminist psychology, a field dedicated to generating and applying feminist knowledge in the service of the public interest. As will become clear in the articles contained in this special issue, the issues represented by the Decade themes are often inextricably intertwined in the lives of women. The rationale for a Decade dedicated to examining these issues from feminist perspectives is compelling.

The individual articles in this special issue reflect feminist perspectives and provide examples of how feminist principles can inform the work of behavioral and social science within the Decade of Behavior. After briefly outlining the challenges and opportunities facing the nation and noting issues to be discussed in more detail by articles included in this special issue, we identify some cross-cutting feminist principles for the research designed to address those challenges. We then consider implications of feminism for models of behavior and for research methods. Finally, we suggest some national policy implications of new findings.

THE CHALLENGE OF GENDER TO DECADE OF BEHAVIOR GOALS

The Decade of Behavior rests on the assumption that understanding the causes and consequences of human actions is key to meeting the challenges of the 21st century. The world continues to experience population pressures and environmental destruction. There is entrenched prejudice

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[1] The extensive list of sponsoring organizations includes the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, American Educational Research Association, American Society of Criminology, Gerontological Society of America, National Academy of Neuropsychology, Public Health Institute, Society for Research in Child Development, Society for Behavioral Medicine, as well as numerous others.

and discrimination, widespread and escalating violence on the streets and in the home, and an ever-widening gap between rich and poor. Functional illiteracy is widespread, and the inadequacies of our healthcare system in the U.S. are compounded by the impact of an aging population, lack of health insurance, and AIDS. Each of these problems is gendered. In other words, for each of these problems, the predictors, dynamics, meanings, experiences, and consequences differ for women and men. Further, in each instance, it is the women who are more likely as a group to be adversely affected. Stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and devaluation detrimentally affect women in the classroom and workplace, and impede the development of programs to advance women's educational and occupational status. Women are differentially the targets of violence in the home with men the more likely target in the streets, underscoring the inadequacy of "one size fits all" programs designed to reduce violence. Examples abound in the healthcare system of the differential and adverse treatment of women with regard to their physical and mental health. The articles in this special issue document the gendered nature of these various societal problems, articulate their differential and negative impact on women, and discuss policy implications.

Additionally, as globalization intertwines the economic fates of humans around the world and immigration increases the diversity of the populace at home, it will not be enough to ask how the problems targeted by the Decade of Behavior differentially affect "women" as a homogeneous group. The need to understand the experiences of women and men with different personal attributes and backgrounds becomes an urgent and integral part of the solutions to the problems ahead. For example, one out of three persons in the United States is a person of color, including one quarter of the children. Within the next 50 years, the figure will rise to more than one out of two persons (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992). If national goals of prosperity and democracy are to be achieved, we cannot afford to fail to develop and utilize the talents and skills of all members of society. In this issue, Nancy Felipe Russo and Kim Vaz (2001) suggest that the development of a feminist "diversity-mindfulness" is needed in psychological education, training, theory, and research if the field is to develop the knowledge base needed to ameliorate the problems that face us.

Toward a Healthier, Safer Society

If the U.S. is to be a healthy and prosperous society in the 21st century, it will be important to create conditions that promote the health and well-being of all its people. Shocking data reveal that the third leading cause of death for youths aged 15–24 is homicide (National Center for Health Statistics, NCHS, 1998). In addition, we find that unintentional injury is the leading cause of death for all Americans aged 1 through 34 years. The vast majority of these are motor vehicle related (National Center for Health Statistics NCHS, Health United States, 1998). Behaviors such as seatbelt use, driving psychology, risk taking, and drinking while driving are obviously critical elements in this safety statistic, and large differences in rates of these behaviors by gender, race, and age underscore the need for a gender-sensitive reconceptualization of research approaches to understanding them.

Health disparities by gender, ethnicity and income persist and affordable health care remains an elusive goal, even as breakthroughs in treatment are discovered. Nationally for all age groups, the leading causes of death are firmly related to behavior: unintentional injury, stroke, and

emphysema, but rates vary by gender and ethnicity. Individual and cultural changes with respect to smoking, exercise, diet, and timely utilization of healthcare services could well reduce the burden of illness associated with these conditions, but programs to foster such changes are unlikely to be effective unless gender is taken into account.

Traditional approaches to psychological (Worell, 2001) and physical healthcare (Travis & Compton, 2001) have been derived from male-centered perspectives; and limitations to comprehensive health knowledge—etiology, diagnosis, and treatment—arise from not having gender as a central construct. Theories of health, both psychological and physical, have been too focused on the universal individual and continue to be highly medicalized. They have promoted a limited view of human nature, excluded consideration of multiple internal and external structures affecting human development and functioning, and promulgated narrowly constructed definitions of health and disorder.

In this special issue, Cheryl Travis and Jill Compton (2001) document the inadequacy of traditional approaches to women's health issues. They show how we must think beyond illness prevention, where the emphasis is often on adherence to medical regimens. To prevent illness and injury, we must consider the social conditions that not only interfere with healthy practices, but contribute to health problems. We must also avoid medicalizing conditions such as menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause that are normal life events and that can typically be managed without recourse to medical intervention (e.g., see Rotosky & Travis, 1996, for a description of the medicalization of menopause from narrowly constructed male-centered perspectives).

Good health also depends on access to healthcare and adequate healthcare coverage. With regard to mental health, Judith Worell (2001) in this issue emphasizes the complex interplay between internal and external factors in women's lives. She argues for feminist approaches designed to promote women's safety, health, positive life styles, personal strength, competence, and resilience. Gendered considerations related to women's status in society and the impact of the roles they have occupied (typically wife and mother) affect autonomy and independence, as well as reactions to stress-producing events. The traditional goal of therapy was to relieve observed symptoms so that women and men could return "to the toxic environments from which their problem originated" (p. 336). However, recent feminist approaches to treatment are focusing on strength and resiliency. Successful treatment outcome is no longer simply symptom reduction, but includes psychological well-being and empowerment. As Worell and her colleagues (e.g., Worell, 2001; Worell & Johnson, D., 2001; Worell & Johnson, N., 1997; Worell & Remer, in press) have suggested, a feminist approach to interventions that support and strengthen the well-being of girls and women would include increased collaboration between feminist-informed practitioners and researchers, increased focus on personal strength, empowerment, resilience in the face of stress, increased availability of feminist research to clinical consumers and practitioners, and increased dissemination of feminist-informed clinical research.

Gender also is directly linked to women's sexual health, and failure to recognize the power dynamics involved in male-female sexual relations continues to impede research, prevention, and intervention programs related to reproductive health and sexuality. As Hortensia Amaro, Anita Raj, and Elizabeth Reed (2001) in this issue point out, the lack of sexual autonomy that earmarks

women's inferior position in society both increases women's risk for sexual health problems as well as decreases their ability to obtain treatment and support when needed. As an example, they document the response to women's health concerns in the U.S. regarding the HIV epidemic, beginning with women being "simply ignored by public health research and practice" to becoming inaccurately "blamed and viewed as vectors" (p. 324). The fact is women are not significant vectors for men's contraction of HIV; infection from men is the primary reason women contract HIV. They show how women's HIV risk is increased due to male-controlled sexual decision-making, male partner violence, and histories of sexual assault. They also show how once infected, the response of the healthcare system does not give women the support and resources they need as mothers and caretakers of HIV-positive partners and/or children. They show how the needs of women of color, poor women, women addicted to alcohol or drugs, and women who exchange sex for drugs or money—that is, women who are marginalized in society—are particularly neglected. They conclude that an empowerment approach that is sensitive to the needs of diverse women is required to promote women's sexual health, and this includes ensuring women's control of their own bodies. Worell (2001) describes a feminist approach to interventions based on empowerment that can be applied to a wide variety of health and social issues.

Health, violence, and crime are profoundly related. It is not possible to discuss any aspect of human harm-doing without considering gender. Aggression and violence are gendered across the life span (White, Donat, & Bondurant, 2000) and have profound consequences for women's physical and mental health (Russo, Koss, & Ramos, 2000). Historically, violence that occurs in the home and in intimate relationships, in the form of physical child abuse, childhood sexual abuse, wife-battering, marital rape, courtship violence, and acquaintance rape, were ignored, relegated to the private sphere, and not identified as violence. However, the women's movement and feminist researchers have challenged these traditional notions, have named abuse in the home and in relationships for what they are—violence, and changed dramatically the way society thinks about these forms of violence (Marin & Russo, 1999). They are now seen as significant societal and public health problems. For example, as Barbara Gutek (2001) in this issue observes, research on sexual harassment, a problem that once "had no name" (p. 385) has now emerged as a major area of study. Social science researchers, legal scholars, and activists have come together around the topic, and through acquiring and applying research knowledge, have achieved remarkable changes in the law and in workplace practices. As Gutek points out, these efforts can provide a model for addressing new issues in the Decade of Behavior.

As Patricia Rozée and Mary Koss (2001) in this issue articulate, the fear of male violence, particularly the fear of rape, is a critical safety issue for women that is also a barrier to their full participation in society. Despite federal legislation contained in the Violence Against Women Act, violence is sadly a common feature of the lives of tens of thousands of girls and women. Although the main priority is to reconstruct male gender role norms and stop the violence at home, at work, and in the community (Koss, Goodman, Browne, Fitzgerald, Keita, & Russo, 1994), there is also a pressing need for information on how to resist and survive rape and information on what services are most beneficial to women.

In this issue, Rozée and Koss (2001) present statistics that document a consistent 15% prevalence rate despite continuing rape prevention and education efforts. After reviewing the

effects of legal and psychosocial interventions, they consider rape prevention and education efforts, and suggest ways to refocus intervention efforts to include rape prevention training for men, rape resistance training for women, and community-based legal interventions.

Janice Steil (2001) in this issue points out that inequality in family relationships underlies partner violence and abuse, and has documented links to the lowered wellbeing of family members. She explores the predictors of family member well-being, pointing out that the financial, physical, and psychological health benefits for women and men are asymmetrical. She documents the dramatic changes in family forms and circumstances over the past three decades, with heterosexual marriages declining from 70% of families in 1970 to 53% today. Seven percent of households are now headed by single parents, and represent one of the most rapidly growing family types.

Steil (2001) points out that the large race and class differences in family forms underscore the importance of developing complex and innovative approaches to research on family-related values, norms, roles, and functioning in various social contexts (e.g., urban vs. rural contexts). When governmental policies and programs are designed to serve one particular family form, the needs of other types of families may go unmet and the basic fabric of society can deteriorate. Steil articulately concludes that the challenge of the Decade of Behavior is "to construct a research agenda aimed at enabling all families to maximize their potential resources and minimize their characteristic vulnerabilities . . . and to thoughtfully consider how best to use our research, our clinical, and our advocacy skills to better promote the well-being of all family types" (p. 359).

Furthermore, advances in reproductive technologies, including in vitro and in vivo fertilization, pose significant challenges to basic assumptions about male and female identity, motherhood and fatherhood, and rights and responsibilities of family members. Changes in the meaning of gender and in the nature of gender roles hold great promise for increased intimacy and meaning in human relationships—as well as opportunities for miscommunication and conflict. Dealing with these problems will require complex approaches and new understandings of issues from diverse points of view.

Toward a More Educated, Prosperous, and Democratic Society

Educational achievement, workplace productivity, economic prosperity, and democratic participation are closely linked. Advances in technology have restructured the workplace, including the need for new types of training, retraining, and continuing education. The greatest number of new job opportunities is in areas that demand creative thinking and high skill levels, making educational issues of fundamental concern. Although education is clearly essential for employment and productivity in the new millennium, approximately 15% of the 72 million children under 18 will not graduate from high school (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999). Communities continue to struggle with crowded classrooms and demoralized students while administrators speculate about the impact of voucher plans.

Janet Hyde and Kristen Kling (2001) in this issue emphasize that women's work and educational achievements are critical to the nation's productivity and can "make the difference between

poverty and prosperity for women and their families" (p. 364). Such achievements also contribute to better physical and mental health for women (Adler & Coriell, 1997; Kessler & Cleary, 1980; Miech, Caspi, Moffitt, Wright, & Silva, 1999). We are entering a dangerous time with regard to the education of girls and boys. We hear that there is a "war on boys" (Sommers, 2000). There are outcries about the level of behavioral problems and school failures, as well as violence, manifested by boys. Feminists are being both implicitly and explicitly blamed (Kaminer, 1995). In fact, these problems for boys are not new. They have been around for a long time. What is new is that now attention is being drawn to issues for girls as well (Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, 1993).

The "chilly climate" for women in the classroom has been discussed by Bernice Sandler and her colleagues (1996). They argue that girls are being "short-changed." We have long known about the differential treatment of girls and boys in the classroom and the deleterious consequences for girls' self-confidence, motivation to achieve, their career options and choices. As Hyde and Kling (2001) in this issue observe, there is a well-documented pattern of gendered educational and occupational choices, as well as level of occupational success. Traditional explanations have focused on intrapsychic factors such as achievement motivation and fear of success. Feminist models, on the other hand, examine the role of social factors—in the family, the peer group, and society at large. Such models provide more complex approaches to educational issues.

Hyde and Kling (2001) review research related to women's educational achievement, documenting the androcentric bias and methodological flaws that characterized earlier work and tracing the emergence of more sophisticated theoretical models as well as new methods for testing them. They observe that research on achievement continues to reflect individualistic male values and goals, which may not be appropriate to apply to either women or ethnic minority men. They suggest that Eccles' theory (Eccles, 1987; 1994), which conceptualizes achievement-related choices in terms of task value and expectations for success—both of which are profoundly affected by gender-role socialization—provides a more profitable approach than traditional conceptualizations for understanding women's career choices.

Their article articulates the contributions of feminist psychologists to a more accurate understanding of achievement motivation and barriers to achievement. They describe how feminists have constructed a more complex portrait of gender similarities and differences, emphasizing the invidious impact of erroneous stereotypes about gender differences in mathematics performance. In addition, their discussion of the relationship of the mode of construction of the Student Aptitude Test (SAT) to the extent of the gender gap in performance reminds us that facts reflect the methodology used to construct them. The fact that the "now-you-see-it-now-you-don't" quality of gender differences in behavior can be as much a reflection of our choice of operational definition and measurement as it is of the nature of the behavior itself is a lesson with implications that reach far beyond the domain of education.

As Barbara Gutek (2001) in this issue describes, over the past three decades women's participation in the paid work force has dramatically increased, and they have begun to invade many traditionally male preserves. By 1995 employment rates were 61.6% for White women, 59.0% for Black women and 53.3% for Hispanic women (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996). Of the new entrants to the workforce in the 1990s, more than 90% were women, minorities, and

immigrants (Women's Bureau, 2000). Gutek (2001) also observes that women's participation has generally advanced more rapidly in areas that rely on specific educational credentials, such as medicine, law, clinical psychology, management, and accounting. Such fields have integrated women much more rapidly than have the skilled trades (e.g., carpentry, plumbing).

Gutek (2001) examines the research findings on women and work over the past 20 years, noting (1) topics that have disappeared over the past 20 years, (2) important topics that were not studied or could not be studied 20 years ago, but are studied now (e.g., women as leaders), (3) previously neglected topics (e.g., stereotyping), and (4) rapidly emerging topics (specifically, mentoring, effects of preferential selection and sexual harassment). She argues that feminist scholarship on women and paid work has begun to separate myth from reality through the accumulation of a substantial research-based literature, but such literature is still insufficiently integrated into mainstream research on the psychology of work.

She also points out that although attitudes have changed, and today most people would agree women "can be chemists, electrical engineers and dot-com entrepreneurs, women in general, but especially women of color, are not entering these fields in large numbers" (p. 381). Further, women who do enter nontraditional fields still face barriers to advancement and inequities in compensation, and even at the highest levels will often need to negotiate a male culture that makes them feel uncomfortable and marginalized. If women are to fully prosper and participate at all levels in society, research and intervention are needed that span the occupational spectrum, and include the lowest to the highest rungs of the occupational ladder.

The nation cannot be considered prosperous or democratic if it has large populations of poor, disenfranchised people, in poor health and lacking the education and resources to cope with the problems in their communities. Issues across Decade of Behavior domains—health, safety, education, economic prosperity, and democratic participation—are highly interrelated and more severely affect the poor. The vast majority of individuals who live in poverty are women and children, and poor women have been among the most neglected populations in psychological research (Reid, 1993). Although there has been unprecedented economic productivity, the gap between the rich and the poor has increased; 28% of all African Americans and 29% of Hispanic Americans remain below the poverty level, underscoring the need to examine the interacting effects of gender, race, and ethnicity in addressing economic issues. The percentage jumps to almost 40% for children under 18 years of age in these groups, making age a critical variable for inclusion as well (National Center for Health Statistics, NCHS, Health United States, 1998).

Indeed, our most urgent social problems across Decade of Behavior domains affect everyone but are concentrated in urban ethnic minority communities—including poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, substance abuse, violence and crime, teenage pregnancy, and disease (particularly AIDS, cancer, diabetes, and hypertension). Without a relevant knowledge base, the diversity-mindful multicultural expertise needed to build on the many strengths of ethnic minority communities and address the problems of urban life will continue to be woefully inadequate. In particular, solutions to the problems addressed across Decade of Behavior domains will require community-based research and intervention programs sensitive to interacting dimensions of gender, race, class, and age.

In summary, the challenges ahead will require complex and comprehensive solutions, solutions that involve critical thinking, confronting one's own values, looking beyond immediate self-interest, and interacting effectively with people who hold diverse perspectives. Neither the secrets of biology nor a broad-band Internet is likely to enable us to meet such challenges. They involve human problems and they require human interventions. But as can be seen by the articles to follow, continuing with the same old ways of doing psychological business will not generate the complex, context-based research knowledge that is needed to achieve Decade goals. These articles illustrate the need for and usefulness of feminist perspectives in obtaining and critiquing research, and, taken as a whole, reflect several cross-cutting feminist principles that can provide a practical framework for tackling the problems highlighted in the Decade of Behavior.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

The premise of this special issue of the *Psychology of Women Quarterly* is that the goals of the Decade of Behavior cannot be realized without attention to gender as a master status, one that defines and affects behavior across diverse social contexts and becomes incorporated into one's personal and social identities. Feminist principles afford a way of thinking that highlights concerns and issues that may be less visible when traditional frameworks are the basis for conceptualization.

The first principle of feminism is egalitarianism: Feminists advocate social, political, and economic equality for women and men. Nonetheless, feminism "encompasses diverse frameworks, ideologies, attitudes, and analyses of the political, economic, and social inequalities between women and men" (Russo, 1999, p. viii). While feminist psychologists have recognized that traditional, modernist approaches to science have rendered invisible significant aspects of women's lives, they have responded to these epistemological concerns in different ways. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate on the various feminist theories, it is important to keep in mind that there is no single, homogeneous feminist perspective. Rather there are many—each multidimensional in nature and often with contested and conflicting meanings that provide rich sources of ideas and approaches for generating new understandings of the lives of women and men.

Nonetheless, a number of common themes can be derived from feminism's basic egalitarian commitment, themes which have been articulated as basic principles of feminist psychology (Wallston & Grady, 1985). Here we highlight four: Inclusiveness and Diversity, Context, Power and Privilege, and Activism.

Inclusiveness and Diversity

Gender is a master status in society that is marked by language and that endows women and men with differential power, privilege, and responsibilities. Feminists focus on how gender affects behavior and experience, recognizing that the effects of gender may differ depending on other dimensions of social status and identity. For example, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical ability, size, religion, and immigrant status are other social dimensions that involve differential access to power and privilege, and that may carry stigma and elicit prejudice and discrimination. As Russo and Vaz (2001) in this issue point out, conducting feminist research in the Decade of

Behavior will require a "diversity mindfulness" (p. 280) in which researchers develop more sophisticated, multidimensional conceptualizations of the causes of the behaviors they study. They articulate the relationship of feminist principles to diversity-mindfulness in more detail, and underscore the importance of not using the experiences of middle-class White women to represent those of all women.

Context

Feminists observe that the meaning and significance of behavior is largely shaped by social and historical context. Many features of gender and gender-related behavior thought to be located within personal traits essential to male or female gender are instead located in a changeable social context and reflected in ethnic, race, and class differences. For example, in this issue, Hyde and Kling (2001) describe how early research on achievement naively used intrapsychic factors to explain women's achievement behavior, and Amaro, Raj, and Reed (2001) articulate the importance of context in understanding women's sexuality, including the differences in sexual scripts across cultures.

The fact that behaviors may or may not be gendered (e.g., considered "masculine" or "feminine") depending on time and place, is congruent with the view that gender and the experiences of individuals occupying a given gender role are socially constructed and contextual. The understanding of fundamental social roles continually changes with political and economic climates, and thus gender can be said to be a socially constructed definition imposed on individuals rather than an inherent feature of them (Parker & Shotter, 1990; Unger, 1989; White, Bondurant, & Travis, 2000).

Kay Deaux and Brenda Major (1987) have provided an extensive review of the relevance of context in gender roles, and have articulated a model for conceptualizing the factors in the person and the situation that may influence gender-related behaviors. Alice Eagly, Wendy Wood, and Amanda Diekman (2000) demonstrated that it is largely artificial divisions of labor and social roles by which many qualities of gender are constructed and maintained. As these roles and contexts are internalized, they form a basis for individual identity, emotional experience, and behavior. For example, in this issue, Rozée and Koss (2001) describe how the cultural definitions of rape have changed over time, vary across cultures, and shape women's responses to being raped as well as impair their ability to defend themselves against perpetrators. Gutek (2001) describes the conceptualization and changing definitions of sexual harassment, and Steil (2001) points out the link between intimate violence and cultural ideologies of gender inequality and of husband dominance and control.

Collectively, these findings indicate that inequality, prejudice, and discrimination associated with gender must be understood in a social and political context. Recognition of the relationship of the social context to personal identity is reflected in the feminist adage, "The personal is political." Although the Decade of Behavior focuses on national problems of the United States, the feminist principle of context reminds us that the nation's problems reflect its relationships with other countries. In the context of increasing globalization, those connections have even greater impact. Thus, in proposing research priorities for the Decade of Behavior, we need to be mindful of the

global context, be aware that conducting our research in a Western context influences our world view, and be open to critical analyses of Western perspectives (Rice, 2001).

Power and Privilege

Feminists devote considerable attention to issues of power and privilege, as have many philosophers. Bertrand Russell (1938) suggested that power might be thought of as a fundamental concept for understanding human relationships in the same way that energy is a fundamental concept of physics. Memmi (1967) noted that power dynamics between people are similar to those between colonizer and colonized nations. The less powerful are seen as being generally deficient, lacking, and as significantly different from the powerful. The less powerful are seen as the "Other." The Other is understood as opaque, mysterious, anonymous, and homogeneous. Susan Fiske (1993) has provided a succinct summary of behaviors and beliefs typical of those in dominant positions, including the mischaracterization of subordinates and exploitation of subordinates.

Power has a tendency to corrupt those who exercise it (Kipnis, 1972), perhaps explaining why individuals often hide from themselves awareness of their own privilege and power (McIntosh, 1988). This kind of personal disclaimer of responsibility is in part due to the fact that mechanisms of power and privilege are often located in the policies and procedures of systems and organizations rather than originating as the conscious will of individuals. These power dynamics operate no matter what the basis for dividing groups and individuals, for example: age, class, color, ethnicity, gender, physical ability, religion, or sexual orientation. These dynamics operate as ubiquitous features of daily life and become reflected in customs, norms, and laws. This "nonconscious ideology" of sexism (Bem, 1993; Bem & Bem, 1970) that enforces women's subordination and oppression must be exposed. Hence, identifying the effects of gendered power and privilege as they relate to diverse phenomena is a priority. At the same time, it is necessary to recognize that differentials in power and privilege are associated with other social categories and are fundamental to other "isms" (e.g. racism) as well.

Activism

Feminism is built on a fundamental desire to eliminate these differentials and move toward equality in ways that improve the quality of life for both women and men. A variety of strategies and methodologies are intended to meet this goal. In keeping with the Decade of Behavior agenda, we begin with a discussion of the problems and challenges ahead. But as Worell (2001) in this issue has emphasized, "the hallmark of feminist psychology since its inception has been its emphasis on promoting empowerment, personal strength, and resilience in the face of past, current, and future adversity" (p. 336). Thus, feminist models of activism and intervention incorporate an empowerment theme and priorities for research reflect the needs of members of the community as they define them.

The general public and public bodies that establish policy need to become partners in supporting such research: "if we heed the call reflected in feminist critiques of psychological research . . . [we will] take seriously the importance of returning to participants and to lay communities at large the understandings we gain from them" (Russell & Bohan, 1999, p. 416). As researchers,

scholars, teachers, practitioners, and citizens, feminists challenge traditional frameworks of society. More particularly, they challenge the traditional frameworks used to generate knowledge.

TOWARD NEW RESEARCH MODELS IN THE DECADE OF BEHAVIOR

Feminist principles of seeking equality and inclusiveness, attending to context, examining power relationships, and advocating change through empowerment may be practiced in a multiplicity of settings. The practice of research is especially relevant to feminist goals because it can reveal hidden assumptions that benefit some at the expense of others and can dispel myths that misrepresent women's lives (Kimmel & Crawford, 1999). In other words, research can illuminate issues of privilege and can empower the voices of those who have been marginalized. Research intended to recover information about women's lives that is distorted and suppressed is therefore intrinsically feminist. Feminist analyses attend to language and labels as the building blocks of social constructions that silence and marginalize the "Other." Feminist research can assume a wide range of forms, but regardless of methodology or specific topic, sets out to challenge systems of exclusion and inequity.

New models of research must move from individualistic conceptions of the self-contained person to models that embed the person in her/his social context (Allen, 1997; Sampson, 1988). Rather than seeking universal laws in a reductionistic framework, it is necessary to develop models of behavior as situated and contextualized. Power and privilege must be included as major variables in these analyses. For example, it will be especially useful to develop models that place greater emphasis on cognitive and socio-emotional factors as shaped by the context of power differentials in relationships and by ostensibly impersonal networks that sustain systems of inequality. Change cannot truly occur at the individual level until there is corresponding change in the larger social context. At the same time, it is necessary to retain a care and respect for the value of the individual and to recognize the reality of diverse experiences.

Traditional theories of behavior have operated from androcentric models based on the lives, values, and concerns of middle-class White males. We have seen theories that catalog differences between men and women and speciously justify the differences based of a host of factors, from the evolutionary and biological to the cognitive and social. Such traditional theories fall short on three dimensions in particular. First, gender is not a core construct; thus, the gendered nature of many phenomena is unacknowledged or misunderstood, and the effects of gender are misattributed. We suggest that gender is such a basic organizing construct for our society that much of behavior cannot be fully understood without considering the central role of gender and of those factors that construct gender in shaping behavior of both women and men.

Second, the traditional research focus is at the level of the individual and rarely does more than give lip service to the importance of understanding the interaction of the person with the situation. This focus stems, in part, from the methodological limitations imposed by traditional types of psychological research, which in its quest to be "objective" has focused on the occurrence of behavior without reference to its meaning.

Third, research has fallen short in investigating the multiple determinants of behavior that go beyond the person in the immediate situation. Too often research has focused on intrapersonal predictors and immediate situational cues, while ignoring the other situational, dyadic, social network, and social-cultural variables that interact with individual difference variables to affect the meaning of specific acts and events. A full understanding requires a more interdisciplinary research approach in which various sources of information are acquired from sociologists, anthropologists, criminologists, and epidemiologists, as well as psychologists, at several levels of analysis (see White & Kowalski, 1998, for an example of a multilevel contextual model of behavior).

These shortcomings are illustrated in the history of research on violence against women. Traditional definitions of aggression have focused on behavioral acts with the potential to do physical harm without regard to their relationship to gender. Indeed, the gendered meanings of the acts and the culpability of violent males has been masked by such gender-neutral labels as "domestic" or "family" violence. As White, Smith, Koss, and Figuereo (2000) point out, this conceptualization of violence as specific behavioral acts weakens a fuller understanding of violence. Actions that are manifested socially, mentally, or emotionally, and that are of a chronic or continuous nature, such as battering or psychological abuse, are ignored.

This approach to definition and measurement makes it easy to ignore differences in the social meanings attached to the use of force and the fact that factors beyond the immediate situational context may be operating. It can only take one act of violence for a man to establish control through fear and intimidation, and asking about number of times that specific violent acts have occurred in the past 12 months does not identify the woman who lives in fear but learns quickly to obey. Furthermore, the same act—being slapped or pinned down, for example—may have quite different effects and meanings depending on gender. Thus, women may subjectively fear death or serious injury when pinned down by men, who are on average larger, stronger, and heavier, whereas men on the basis of their size advantage may not fear harm until much more escalated levels of force are applied to them.

In contrast, feminist models have conceptualized aggression as a component of a culturally constructed masculinity associated with power and control that is used to dominate. Violence emerges from social inequalities, motivated by a need for power, and is fundamentally rooted in a patriarchal value system. Thus, male violence against women is seen as a social mechanism for the control of women that is supported at multiple levels—biological, psychological, social, economic, and cultural—and requires knowledge generated from interdisciplinary perspectives to be fully understood.

This more complex way of thinking about violence reveals its relationship to health and education in ways that might otherwise have been ignored. Physical assault is often associated with subsequent unsafe health practices, increased medical utilization, and adverse behavioral outcomes like suicide, substance use, unplanned pregnancies, unwanted births, and need for abortion (Gleason, l993; Koss, Koss, & Woodruff, 1991; McCauley, Kern, Kolodner, Dill, Schroeder, DeChant, Ryden, Derogatis, & Bass, 1995; Plictha, l996; Russo & Denious, 2001; Smith, Edwards, & DeVellis, l998). The abuse often has social/economic consequences when abusive partners deny women access to household resources and decision-making. Abuse often

reduces educational attainment and income, reduces women's participation in public life, and lessens their contribution to social and economic development. The result can affect the quality of life for children in the home and alter women's employment patterns. Domestic violence influences women's earnings and ability to remain in a job (Browne, Salomon & Bassuk, 1999; Carillo, 1992; Hyman, 1993).

In short, new models for research on women's lives require seeing the world in more complex ways, ways that consider the meaning of behaviors in their contexts. There is a rich feminist literature critiquing the biases in the traditional medical models of mental health. Explanations of differential diagnoses of mental health problems in men and women typically suggested differences in women's and men's personalities, differences in stressors experienced, or differences in capacity to deal with stress, often due to physiological factors. Problems were located within the person (Brooks & Forrest, 1994; Brown, 1992). In contrast, the new models require multidisciplinary research that generates knowledge at multiple levels—from the biological to the cultural—and integrating this knowledge into a coherent picture. All of this means asking new questions and developing new methods to answer them. A feminist focus on the social fabric of women's lives puts a variety of issues into a more complex perspective. For example, depression and injuries from physical assault reflect much more than simply biomedical conditions and intrapsychic mechanisms. The role of oppression and exploitation becomes salient. Their amelioration then becomes part of the treatment.

EXPANDING THE RANGE OF ACCEPTABLE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

As noted in the introduction to *Psychology of Women Quarterly*'s special issue on innovative methods, feminist researchers are "seeking to expand the ways they raise and answer questions, to think differently about the process of doing research, and to seek ways to make it more useful. The time to promote innovation is now. . . ." (Crawford & Kimmel, 1999, p. 1). But as Travis (1999) points out in the preface to that issue, although feminist research can illuminate issues of privilege and empower the voices of those who have been marginalized, "there is tremendous resistance to this kind of oppositional knowledge" (p. vii). She observes that feminist research contains an inherent contradiction: "conducting research inspired by feminist principles is further complicated, because research typically both derives from and re-affirms the society in which the research is conducted . . . How can one engage in social change when the very activity of research is itself a reflection of the status quo?" (p. vii). The solution must be to challenge the system of exclusion and inequality that is incorporated into the traditional scientific enterprise. Feminists have been quite articulate in doing just this.

Mary Gergen (1988) and Janis Bohan (1990a; 1990b) have articulated many of the basic problems of traditional approaches to knowledge that inform feminist approaches to science:

1. facts are not independent of theory or method;
2. the scientist and the subject of study are not independent;
3. value-free, neutral science does not exist;
4. knowledge cannot be understood separate from the context in which it is embedded;
5. knowledge or truth cannot be gained through disengaged observation;
6. traditional modern science limits the vision and usefulness of psychology.

As a result of feminist critiques of science there has been a strong call for acceptance of a wider variety of research methods. These include discourse analysis, ethnography, existential-phenomenological inquiry, focus groups, interviews, narrative investigations, performative methods, and the Q-sort.

Feminist concerns with methods call attention to the naturalistic versus the artificial; to the social context of data collection as it affects meaning for participants; and to the dangers of power imbalances (and hence risk of exploitation) in the research process. Feminism recognizes that we need to understand narratives about social representations—how the meanings of experiences of individuals, as well as groups of individuals, are constructed, maintained, and changed over time.

Innovations in quantitative approaches are required as well. In particular, there is a need to develop and apply more sophisticated quantitative methods that can be used to examine interactive and reciprocal effects over time. Ultimately, a multiplicity of qualitative and quantitative methods is necessary if we are to generate a full and complex portrait of women's lives in their diverse contexts.

Most importantly, we need to move beyond the field's obsession with methodology. Focusing on the form and framework of the basic question is critical to a feminist approach to research. The focal point should be the research question—this then should drive the choice of method. When we start looking at a person in a web of social interactions, new questions arise. The method chosen may or may not be traditional or it may be an innovative use of a traditional method. The point is that we cannot advance knowledge if we don't ask the right questions. And how the question is asked and what language we use frame the type of answer we are able to obtain (White & Farmer, 1992).

So, for example, asking why do battered women stay with abusive partners generates a very different picture than asking what kind of social system would allow so many men to feel entitled to uncontrolled violence within their own families. Instead of asking how can we help battered women adjust to their violent situations, feminists would seek to empower them, asking what personal and social factors and what kinds of public policies might enable battered women to pursue identities and lives that are more rewarding and promising. Instead of asking why are women more likely to be anxious and depressed than men, we can ask how can they be so healthy given their higher likelihood of poverty, powerlessness, and experience of violence, among other things? What contributes to women's positive coping and resiliency? How would research change when we view menopause as a liberating experience rather than a debilitating disease? When we seek to examine the meaning of motherhood for women over the life cycle and across cultures? When we use women's perceptions and definitions to create our measures as opposed to men's (e.g., as has been done in research on sexual harassment)?

These questions do not lend themselves to a singularly best form of feminist methodology (Griffin & Phoenix, 1994; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992). Multimethod, multimodal approaches that match method to question are required. The days of distorting the question to fit the method should be put behind us. We need numbers to tell us about incidence and prevalence. Statistics

allow us to see overall gendered patterns found in society and stories help us better understand the complex dynamics of complicated social lives.

For example, we see that at every stage of development, women are the victims of intimate violence more often than men (White, Bondurant, & Travis, 2000). We see the differential pattern of diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental health problems across the lifespan (Travis & Compton, 2001), and we see differential patterns in education that place girls and boys on different academic trajectories, with the consequent result of different achievement and career outcomes (Gutek, 2001; Hyde & Kling, 2001). We need complex longitudinal and multivariate studies of predictors of outcomes (including interactive effects) and how they vary depending on gender, race, class, and other dimensions of social status. However, we need women's stories to give substance and meaning to the numbers, and to identify complexities that limited quantitative lenses can overlook.

Similarly, as Cheryl Travis and her colleagues (Travis & Compton, 2001; Travis, Greesley, & Crumpler, 1991) and others (e.g., Gallant, Keita, & Royak-Schaler, 1997; Stanton & Gallant, 1995; Ussher, 2001) have noted the health literature is rife with examples of lack of attention to gender as a variable and inappropriate application of male healthcare models. They point out that revisioning the issues and including gender in the analyses lead to new research questions. Coronary health provides a prime example. The assumption has been that this is a man's disease. However, incorporating gender into the picture reveals that heart disease is the leading cause of death for women. Questions about the course of the disease in women have led to an appreciation of the unique aspects of coronary disease for women and men. We now know that presenting symptoms are different for women and men; thus, for years adequate diagnosis and treatment for women was impaired by the assumption that symptoms would be the same for both. In addition, the implications of certain risk factors vary by gender. For example, diabetes-like conditions are greater risk factors for women than men whereas for men high blood pressure and cholesterol present greater risk.

Framing questions from a feminist perspective may sometimes involve "simply" extending sound research and scholarship to women's experiences, including special attention to ethnic minority women. In other cases, combining traditional and innovative methods or implementing innovative methods may be necessary. Research questions about the relationship between the status of women and various outcomes should explore how gender is a marker that may result in biased decisions in a range of venues, from healthcare to educational and employment opportunities. We should ask: To what extent have some men's needs and interests, particularly those of middleclass white men, been privileged over those of women and other men? How can research be funded and conducted that is likely to produce models of behavior that are as accurate and complete for women as they are for men?

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

To understand health, safety, educational, and work issues we must first recognize that culturally based socialization practices encourage men and women to be different. Gendered patterns of behavior are not due to biological destiny. Stereotypes of how women and men are supposed to behave, experiences that reinforce stereotypical behaviors, and a social structure that supports

power inequities between women and men all contribute to gendered patterns that are revealed in the articles of this issue. Inequality in relationships, coupled with cultural values that embrace domination of the weaker by the stronger means that the more powerful controls money, resources, activities, and decisions. A society where there is systematic unfair treatment of women, minorities, and other marginalized groups, and continuing lack of economic equality, results in less access to social, political, economic and educational venues where diverse voices can be heard and make a difference. Patterns of behavior are different in societies where there is no formal hierarchy that privileges one group over another and in which women and men exercise relatively equal power (Sanday, 1997).

Feminist critiques of social policy indicate that to understand social policy, we must understand how the system deals with women, look at the structures that omit women, and examine the impact of policies on women (Woodward, 1997). A serious consideration of gender and of feminist perspectives will have profound implications for psychological models of behavior and our methods of investigation, as well as public policy. As the articles in this issue suggest, a number of public policies are in need of re-examination. These include policies related to safety, such as rape reform laws; laws governing domestic violence and stalking; healthcare, such as reproductive biology, treatment of victims of crime, and access to healthcare; education, such as testing and criteria for admission to higher education and scholastic awards; and workplace productivity, such as hiring practices, criteria for promotion and salary increases, and sexual harassment.

The need for activism is clear, and the Decade of Behavior offers a framework and vehicle that feminists can use to foster feminist research in Decade domains. Thus, an understanding of the potential contributions and difference that a feminist perspective can make is crucial.

Fortunately, there is a model that informs the practice of feminism and that the larger Decade of Behavior can incorporate as we strive to meet the goal of a safer, healthier, better educated and more productive democratic society. At the first National Conference on Education and Training in Feminist Practice at Boston College in 1993, feminist process was defined as a set of transformative actions. As described by Judy Worell and Norine Johnson (1999) these include building structure for diversity, distributing leadership and responsibility, valuing all voices, honoring personal experience, deciding through consensus, and promoting social change. As will be seen throughout the articles in this special issue, these processes are embodied in many of the recommendations presented. In addition to providing a foundation for new research ideas and approaches, we believe that combined with original research articles, it also provides a useful framework for introducing graduate students to research from a feminist perspective. It is ideally suited to a jigsaw approach with students taking responsibility for choosing, reporting on, and critiquing articles, and developing new research ideas for the various domains.

This special issue is part of the process designed to bring a feminist voice to the Decade of Behavior. These articles argue for the centrality of feminist psychology to accomplishing these goals and provide a host of models for researchers who seek to use their scientific training in the service of the public interest. We anticipate that this special issue will serve as a foundation for the expansion of feminist scholarship in the new millennium and that it will be used by

researchers, educators, policymakers and activists to move toward accomplishing the goals of the Decade of Behavior.

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