Benefiting by Design
Benefiting by Design: Women of Color in Feminist Psychological Research

Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

CHEMBA RAGHAVAN, KIM VAZ
AND ARLENE EDWARDS

Benefiting by Design: Women of Color in Feminist Psychological Research, serves as a clarion call for broadening the term “women of color” to include a multiplicity of contexts, and a wide range of ethnicities. This volume offers a comprehensive overview of the field of the psychology, with a specific focus on women of color and consists of the latest developments in theory, research, practice and pedagogy. This manuscript provides the reader with an update of the current literature, interventions, innovative, and cutting-edge information about women of color while offering a unique contribution in that it fits with the current view of intersectionality, a move beyond strategic essentialism. The contributors address diverse areas about women of color as well as neglected areas in the literature such as research on adolescents and spirituality, a central aspect of concern in communities of color. Finally, this volume offers the opportunity for women who do not normally reach audiences of professionals, the chance to be heard. This anthology presents models of senior and emerging scholars collaborating in the area of Women of Color Studies. Given the influence of the senior scholars in the field of psychology, their collaboration adds validity to this budding area of study. In addition, the manuscript will serve to address the need for strong research designs and rigor in empirical inquiry, while acknowledging the value of qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieving this rigor and in providing recommendations for community-based interventions and responses.

The theory of intersectionality emerged from the position papers and theorizing of black feminists who first introduced the concepts of “multiple consciousness” and the “interlocking systems of oppression” as analytic tools to be used in research, social action and academic analysis (King, 1988, Combahee River Collective, 1982). Legal scholars have also noted the importance of intersectionality in their field. In the recent past,
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courts refused to recognize “compound discrimination,” that is, bringing a suit based on gender and race, rather than gender or race. Critical legal theorists adopted the idea of interactive categories to address discrimination facing women attorneys of color, female litigants of color and to recognize previously unacknowledged categories (Haddon, Allen, & Liebenberg, 2003). Given the multiple points of convergence and the absorption of analysis by women of color into varying disciplines, intersectionality as a theory has made its way into psychology, sociology, literature and cultural studies, legal theory, and advocacy and policy development.

There has been some debate in the field of feminist research on whether intersectionality (or the notion of identities as being multiply influenced) is best viewed as being anticategorical (viewing categories as unhelpful in the deconstruction of societal divisions), intercategorical (viewing the study of relationships among categories of oppression as vital to understanding the inevitable inequalities of society) or intra-categorical (where categories are viewed as arbitrary, but interesting in that they offer opportunities for analysis and re-drawing of boundaries). Perhaps the intercategorical approach is best represented as the “mid-point position” in this debate (McCall, 2005). Whatever the theoretical approach to analysis, it is clear that most contemporary feminist researchers agree that understanding intersectionalities of gender, race, class, caste, sexualities, sexual orientation etc. is critical to promoting social equality.

Feminists studying the psychology of gender have incorporated several aspects of intersectionality. These include the idea that no social group is homogeneous; that individuals are “located” in social structures that are determined by the power relationships that constitute the structure; and that there are ramifications specific to embodying multiple identities that are not the simple effect of adding these together (i.e. intersecting categories create unique identities and psychologies (p. 534)). Surveying the literature in this field, Stewart and McDermott (2004) note that studying the multidimensional aspects of people’s lives helps to offer a more complex portrait of difference. Central to this understanding is examining a person’s material reality and the social structures which give rise to that reality particularly social inequality, power arrangements, and access to power. Stewart and McDermott suggest that psychologists can use intersectionality in their research by allowing researchers to ask different types of questions about the salience of various identities in a range of social contexts, research understudied groups, and recognize that there are assumptions which underlie the generalized knowledge that we are believed to have.
In the sociology of sexualities (Gamson & Moon, 2004), intersectionality has been used to study how the languages of sexuality have allowed those holding differing forms of institutional power to naturalize oppression by race, gender, and class through such exemplary stereotypes of black men as sexual predators, white women as sexually innocent and Asian American women as sexually exotic. Sociologists have studied the intersectionalites that constitute desire, preferences and attractions. Desire is stimulated by several dimensions colliding such as age, race, gender, class to determine “one’s attractional type.” They have analyzed the centrality of policing sexuality in the project of nation building in that while building a nation, officials inspect and control the sexuality of its citizens, condemn the sexuality of noncitizens and stigmatize those citizens whose sexualities fall outside the sexual norms of the nation.

Crenshaw (1997) introduced intersectionality in a discussion about violence against women of color as a theoretical and organizing tool that could mediate “the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics” (p. 539). Yet, intersectionality can be turned into its opposite intention. For example, in an analysis of black male crisis narratives, which discuss the plight of black men as “at-risk” and subjugated patriarchs vis a vis, white men, Lindsay (2005) demonstrates how authors of black male crisis narratives both in the United States and Britain have used the theory of intersectionality in a way that does not advance the progressive politics of feminist of color, nor call for a coalition among varying oppressed groups; but rather to rationalize and concretized their hetero-normative and patriarchal advantages. Lindsay argues for the use of intersectionality as a category of analysis that is less about advocacy and more about an understanding of the nature and consequences of the intersection of social categories.

Misunderstandings of the multiply-determined social locations of women of color have led to mishandling of female litigants’ court cases, problems in diagnoses and treatment in mental and physical health care, and retention difficulties in graduate and professional school. The theory of intersectionality can help to explain the gender and cultural norms that influence the choices and motivations of women of color to stay in what may appear to outsiders as crippling situations e.g. in battering relationships and catering to the demands of extended families. Additionally, the theory of intersectionality can reveal how marginalized groups are conterminously privileged and oppressed. The authors included in this anthology incorporate the intersectional approach to broaden the discussion of research epistemologies; to dislodge discourses
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of dominant ideologies in policy, practice, research and cultural inventions such as the family; and to suggest necessary institutional transformations in the education and training of graduate level students.

The first section of the anthology, tackles the difficulties still facing the field of psychology in its production of research that addresses a diverse population. These include the need to address the assumptions underlying methods and analyses, the need for increased accountability in researcher competence in working with communities of color, and the need to legitimize a variety of data types such as those obtained at the community-level among others. In their chapter, “Trends in Participant Representation (Or the Lack Thereof)” Julia Grace Jester and April Dye analyzed several prominent social psychological journals to determine the population being used in psychology today. Their review consists of issues appearing between May, 2002 to April, 2003 of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, and Psychology of Women Quarterly*. They assessed the articles based on the investigators’ inclusions of gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and age. Results indicate a need for increased diversity in participant use and a need for consistent presentation of demographic information in research papers. Jester and Dye note that the obstacles to creating a psychology that is inclusive of at least proportionate representation of people of color involve changing training programs so that not only are researchers better positioned to reach various populations, but prepared to avoid reproducing research methods and interpretations that rely on deficit model thinking.

The next two chapters shift the focus on dislodging identifications with dominant discourses to bring together disparate content to illustrate that socially dominant ideas permeate the clinical work for both therapists and clients of color and the ideologies that drive research and policy. Kristine Andrews and NiCole Buchanan explore the factors that render African American women vulnerable to contracting HIV/AIDS in their chapter, on HIV/AIDS in African American Women” They note that African American women are particularly vulnerable when they are embedded in gendered power relationships because they are restricted in their ability to insist on safer-sex practices for fear of being seen as too promiscuous or too emasculating of their men. African American women who believe the stereotypes that they are not feminine and who are anxious about the low male to female gender ratios can find their passive behaviors reinforced and acquiescence to riskier sexual practices increased. Feminist theory implications for therapeutic interventions include attention to power differentials in the therapeutic relationship; awareness of the marginalization
of black women’s voices and values as they navigate the medical institutions that come to predominate in their lives; and the need to help them value their own safety over the fear of being rejected by their male partner.

Heather Bullock and Wendy Limbert use critical race theory and critical race feminism to deconstruct contemporary welfare policy and to advocate for psychologists to use their position to foster a just welfare system in their chapter “Moving from ‘Work-First’ to ‘Human Welfare First:’ New Frameworks for Theorizing about Poverty and U.S. Welfare Policy.” Current welfare policy limits poor women’s access to higher education, confines them to low wage jobs and prevents them from taking care of their children full-time. Psychologists, they argue are not eager to utilize power-based explanations of welfare reform and chose instead to emphasize approaches for reducing personal poverty by a shift into the workforce. Bullock and Limbert outline which interests are fostered by traditional psychological paradigms, i.e., who is hurt and who benefits from punishing welfare policies and discuss how to modify the prevailing dialogue from “work first” to “human welfare first.”

Working within communities of color, even on theoretical terms means situating oneself in faith communities that are not remotely considered in advanced training programs in the field of psychology. Yet the spiritual backgrounds of communities of color are at the same time intensely political and politicized as efforts at imperialism denigrate and demonize theologies of difference. In this section are examples of a widen-scope for addressing the mental health of women of color. In “Challenging the Stigma of Self and Spirit,” we encounter a lesson on the project of imperialism and its product, the creation of a “Oriental” (i.e., Muslim) woman; the spiritual practices of African religions as central healing technologies to deal with stress, anxiety, and depression; and the incorporation of spiritual tenets from Islam and Christianity as well as inclusion of leaders from these faiths in the drug treatment of addicted women.

Sarah Darghouth calls attention to psychology’s exclusion of Arab and Muslim Americans in “Prisons of Gaze: Painting the Portrait of the Oriental Woman.” Darghouth uses her work on the stereotyped “Oriental woman,” silent, sensual and eroticized in the imagination of Western politics and deployed to further contemporary political aims to remind psychologists that their research and practice is driven by social and historical realities of the Arab and Muslim woman as “Other”. The veil constitutes an important symbol that condenses the gendered hierarchical relations between colonizer and colonized, man and woman and positions
Muslim women in the post-911 United States as the most visible representative of Islam and possibly the target of hate and prejudice. Darghouth challenges psychologists in the project of creating an inclusive discipline to move beyond an epistemology that when she is envisioned, the Muslim and Arab woman appears either as silently suffering under the burqa, in need of rescuing from religious fanatics or is herself a fundamentalist with the ambition of a suicide bomber. Psychologists have to rescue themselves from the prisons of their own gaze.

In “Ritual and Recovery: ‘The Dead Mother Complex’ in Tobe M. Correal’s Finding Soul on the Path of Orisa: A West African Spiritual Tradition, Kim Marie Vaz integrates the West-African derived Yoruba religious practices through the lens of psychoanalysis to explore a single memory of Tobe Correal, a priestess of Yoruba religion. The goal of the chapter is to highlight the importance of childhood memories in the narration of her life story and specifically to her ritual practices by offering an analysis of how troubling memories of her mother’s depression and hence, emotional unavailability are avoided by displacing them onto ritual. Correal’s engagement with a religious community, in particular her relationship with her spiritual mother restarts and reinvigorates her childhood strivings, expectations and hopes of continued psychological development.

Kimberly Kirby, Lois Benishek, Alicia Padovano, Rachel Corbin, Mary Louise Kerwin, and Gerald Stahler in “CREST: A Faith-Based Intervention for Cocaine-Dependent African American Women” report the outcome of a study conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of a religious/spiritual-based intervention (R/SI) among 18 cocaine dependent African American homeless mothers in residential treatment. The mothers were randomly assigned to Standard Treatment or Standard Treatment plus R/SI. The R/SI condition resulted in better outcomes and they attribute this to the role of community support through African American churches as a promising means of providing reinforcement for enacting behaviors that are inconsistent with cocaine-addicted life-styles.

The high risks for experiencing compromises in psychological and physical health associated with being a young woman of color are explored in Section Four, “Growing Up Multiply Marked: Experiences of Young Women of Color.” In “Misunderstood, Misled, and Misfit: The Marginalization Experiences of African American Lesbian Youth” Ami Robinson describes the hostile environment that lesbian youth encounter as they attempt to grow up and “come out.” Young, African American lesbians have unique psychosocial stressors, a phenomenon feminist literature has come to term “triple jeopardy;” i.e., being black, a woman,
and lesbian. This is a group that is abandoned by school officials, family and church and coping with this outsider status can manifest as promiscuous heterosexuality to hide their difference or either to prove their attraction to women. Masculine or butch identified-lesbians who attempt to resemble their same age heteronormative peers by flirting and pairing with same-sex peers, risk being accused of harassing heteronormative girls and or forming gangs. Robinson introduces a unique term, i.e., “attractional orientation” to refer to lesbian youth beyond the limited scope of sexuality and to refer to the range of experiences of being sexual and human. She offers a number of strategies that educators, parents, spiritual leaders, and mental health providers can use to appropriately address the varied needs of young, African American lesbians.

In “Bodies at the Border: Cultural Influences on the Body Image Development of Latina Girls,” Deborah Schooler and Janna L. Kim suggest that the consequences of body dissatisfaction among Latina youth is an growing problem and one that is increasing their risk for disordered eating, decreased self-esteem and increased depression. The earlier onset of menarche and associated weight gain in comparison to white peers, the role of acculturation with its emphasis on eating fast foods and intensive television watching and the thin-ideals pervasive in English and Spanish-language media shape problematic attitudes towards the body. They suggest that only future research that addresses within-group difference, consistent measures of body satisfaction and complex interrelationships between acculturation, media and body image can provide indicators of which Latinas are at risk and the most important factors contributing to that risk.

The reciprocal influences of the intrapersonal and interpersonal forces on the subjective well-being and achievement possibilities of Asian-, Latin, and Caribbean-American women in the United States shapes the discussion in Section Five on the “Cultural and Family Expectations of Women from Immigrant Communities.” Neesha Patel’s “Racialized Sexism in the Lives of Asian-American Women,” traces the roots and contemporary manifestations of “gendered racism,” those experiences that intersect with gender and racism uniquely experienced by women of color, a term coined by Philomena Essed (1990). Gendered racism emerged from the subordinate status assigned to Asian women who immigrated to the United States in the early nineteenth century. Consigned to the most marginal forms of employment as domestics, agricultural workers, and later as objects of exhibitions, by the second half of the century their image had become transformed and fixed as prostitutes, which served to
connotes the inferiority of Asian cultures. The image of the Asian American woman remains entangled in ideas of submission and sexual mysticism resulting in specific gendered practices such as the mail order-bride market that posits the Asian American woman as a fetish. Patel links the psychological consequences of gendered racism with such negative trends among Asian American women as poor body image, interpersonal sensitivity, and compliance with stereotypes or reactive attempts to prove oneself different.

In Examining the Effects of Racism on the Emotional Well-Being of Caribbean Immigrant Women: An Integration of Feminist and Phenomenological Approach,” Alisha Ali investigates the psychological consequences associated with encountering racism which she defines as a specific form of life stress. She applied an adapted form of the contextual rating system to the semi-structure interview data of 40 Caribbean women who immigrated to either the U.S. or Canada to determine their most severe incident of life stress experience in their new country. One third of the participants agreed that their most stressful life event contained elements of racism. In coping with racism, the women reported feelings of anger, low-self worth and regrets about immigrating. Ali concludes with recommendations for conducting anti-racist research and advocacy.

Whereas racism textures the experience of gender, culture patterns family expectations of the ideal girl/woman. How culturally-based gender ideals become enacted in the lives of immigrant young women of color is the subject of the chapter that completes the section. In “‘Doing Gender’: Parental Beliefs about Gender Identity in Asian-Indian Immigrant Families” by Chemba Raghavan, Jessica Sherman, Charis Stiles, Olivia Roberts and Sarah Stamper demonstrate that middle-class Asian-Indian parents are fostering hybrid gender identities in their daughters. Based on interview and diary data of 27 Asian-Indian parents and 10 non-immigrant and non-Asian comparison parents of elementary school-aged girls, Raghavan et al report that Asian parents use both essentialism (“You are an Indian girl”) and social constructionism (desire for their daughters to be model minorities) in their discourse with their daughters. In this study, Asian parents, in their everyday behavior with their daughters, communicate their expectation that unlike the non-immigrant, non-Indian parents, they are socializing young women who will be both self-sufficient and socio-family-centered upon adulthood. In contrast, non-immigrant, White American parents communicate the expectation that their young girls will become women who must learn to cope with situations alone because of limited family involvement. Whether or not parental
expectations become internalized in their daughters is a subject for future study.

Feminist psychologists worry that a monocultural, hierarchical, and competitive academic climate impedes the success of female students of color in higher education. The chapters in Section Six titled “Paradigm Shifts: Relocating Women of Color in Higher Education Through Pedagogical and Curriculum Transformations” discuss how a shift in the learning environment and changes in coursework will contribute to increased completion of academic degrees for this population. How well mental health graduate programs fair in matriculating multiculturally competent graduates is the focus of the chapter “Multicultural Counseling Competency of Students in Counseling, Psychology, and Social Work Graduate Programs” by Melanie Hassel and Nina Nabors. They explore several areas related to multiculturalism competency. First is an assessment of the self-reported multicultural counseling competency of graduate students in clinical psychology, counseling, and social work at a public Midwestern university. Next, they indicate the graduate students’ perception of their program as multicultural or monocultural and determine whether graduate students value multicultural training. Finally, they examine the behaviors that predict higher multicultural counseling competency scores. This chapter represents a valuable contribution to the literature, given that their findings are based on a variety of mental health specialties: social work, clinical psychology and counseling.

In “Triangulation of Voice: The Baker Principles as Foundational Themes in the Contemporary Community Work of Black women and the Informed Practice of Community Psychology” Arlene Edwards discusses how to revamp graduate education in the field of community psychology through the use of the principles derived from the civil rights leadership of Ella Baker, themes in Black women’s community work, and the principles of the field of community psychology. Edwards’ triangulation paradigm stresses giving voice to Black women in their communities, focusing on community strengths, attending to issues of oppression, recognition of diversity as strength, including the participant as expert and expanding the sources of knowledge that are valued in community psychology.

The investigations and scholarship contained in Benefiting by Design has grown out of the feminist commitment to use research as a tool for creating a more just society. It rejects simplistic dichotomies between the academy and community activism and incorporates a more complex view of research and application as dialectical. The contributors call psychologists to examine their own distortions around gender, race and
other points of difference, to question their own motivations for either including or excluding varieties of communities of color in their research agendas, to legitimize innovative methods and strategies, and to provide progressive leadership in the new global landscape. Last but not the least, the volume highlights the need for involvement in issues relating to women of color from diverse sections of society, increasing men’s engagement in these issues, and inter-sectoral dialogues in research and policy relating to women of color in the United States.

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I. EMERGING TRENDS IN RESEARCH APPROACHES
TRENDS IN PARTICIPANT REPRESENTATION
(OR THE LACK THEREOF)

JULIA GRACE J. JESTER AND APRIL K. DYE

Abstract

Creating a psychology that represents more than just a limited portion of the population is an important problem facing psychologists today. Previous researchers (Graham, 1992) have demonstrated that much of the current research is conducted using white, middle-class, college students. Other research has been found to assume negative stereotypes when researching women or people of color or neglects to include non-white participants (Demos, 1990). This chapter presents a review of several prominent journals to determine the population being used in psychological research today. The review covers May, 2002 to April, 2003 issues of Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, and Psychology of Women Quarterly. Studies in these journals were analyzed for inclusion of gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and age. Results indicate a need for increased diversity in participant use and a need for consistent presentation of demographic information in research papers.

Women have had to fight for the chance to be scholars of psychology, subjects of psychology, and topics of psychology (Unger, 2001, and Scarborough & Furumoto, 1989). This fight, however, has not done enough to increase the representation of women of color, nor to help eliminate the racism and stereotypes present in research on women of color. Women of color have unique life experiences that should be represented and discussed accurately in psychological research instead of being placed in the broader, overarching category of “women”.

This chapter is an analysis of the inclusion (or lack thereof) of minorities, especially women of color, in psychological research studies. We gathered information on gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and age, and hoped to find that the studies we reviewed would be inclusive of women of color and other minority groups, as well as the intersection of
these categories. Unfortunately what we found indicated that there is little to no reporting of inclusive research practices.

**Participant Inclusion in Previous Research**

Sears (1986) reviewed journals in the early 1980's and found that much of the work being done in mainstream psychology journals was relying most heavily upon college populations. Sears claims that

> “the human being of strong and irrational passions, of intractable prejudices, who is strongly embedded in tightly knit family and ethnic groups, who develops and matures with age, is not that of contemporary social psychology; it does not provide much room for such as Palestinian guerrillas, southern Italian peasants, Winston Churchill, Idi Amin, Florence Nightingale, Archie Bunker, Ma Joad, Clarence Darrow, or Martin Luther King” (p.527).

Sears’ focus was on social psychology, but his ideas are applicable to the field.

Further research conducted by Reid (1995) found that when searching a database for the inclusion of lower socioeconomic class women, 14,517 articles concerned “women”, and 556 articles examined “poverty”. When Reid combined the search terms, however, “women” and “poverty” yielded 86 articles, 82 articles looked at “women” and “working class”, “women” and “low income” returned 99 articles. This is .5% of the abstracts concerning women, which indicates the insufficiency of research on this topic considering how many women are of low socioeconomic status. There is a need for more research that acknowledges the intersections between socioeconomic status and gender.

A review of the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* from 1939 to 1987 was conducted by Demos (1990) looking for all articles in that journal pertaining to African Americans. He found that only about 15% of the articles pertained at all to black families. Many of those articles created a biased portrait of African Americans by focusing on what Demos termed a “culture of poverty” thesis, which assumed and looked for black families to be poor, undereducated, and generally not as functional as white families. Graham (1992) analyzed the 1970 to 1989 issues of six journals (including *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology and Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*) for the presence of articles about African Americans. She found that the number of African Americans represented in these journals has, in fact, declined over time. Graham stated that “just as mainstream psychology was once accused of
being ‘womanless’ (see Crawford & Marecek, 1989), so too in the 1990s it is becoming ‘raceless’” (p.629). By combining Graham’s results with Demos’ findings, we can see that African American women are not only being portrayed sparingly, but also in a biased manner when they are being represented.

As a result of this previous work, the results indicate that much of psychological research is inappropriately interpreted as having generalizability. Why are psychologists generalizing to all human beings when they are only studying a small, un-representative sample? Overall, minorities, especially women of color, are rarely studied and are often portrayed in a negative light. As a result, our own research hopes to update these findings with more current research in order to discover how and when women of color are being viewed in psychological research.

**Method**

For this chapter, we reviewed the May, 2002 to April, 2003 issues of *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology (JPSP)*, *Psychology of Women Quarterly (PWQ)*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin (PSPB)*, and *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology (JESP)* to determine if psychologists publishing in prominent journals are using research participants that include a variety of ethnicities, SES’s, sexualities, and sampling methods. We checked for participants’ data along the following parameters: age, race, gender, sexuality, culture, non-college populations, and location. This chapter represents a portion of a larger research project that compared the articles from the 2002 to 2003 timeframe to articles from 1992 to 1993. For this chapter we are focusing solely on the later timeframe in order to investigate more current information on population representation. The overall project, however, found little difference between the two time periods.

The sample focused on journals that specifically elicited research that typically generalizes to the larger population, and more specifically journals that were particularly relevant to our own orientations as feminist, social psychologists. This led us to focus on JPSP, PSPB, and JESP because as a whole, these journals, which focus mainly on social psychology, tend to include studies that make generalizations about behaviors and attitudes that are supposed to be representative of large populations. The goal was to determine, based upon participant data, if such generalizations should be warranted. PWQ, although not strictly a journal focused on social psychology, was included to determine if, as a...
journal focused on women, it would be inclusive of women of color or restricted to white females.

Since some articles contained within them multiple studies, we catalogued each study separately within our data set. This allowed us to take each study as an individual opportunity to include diversity and allowed us to look at data consistently, rather than comparing an article with a single study to an article with five studies. We reviewed a total of 890 studies across 398 articles. We report our findings based upon the 890 studies.

**Categorization Criteria**

All our categorization is based upon information reported within the reviewed studies. When some information was not mentioned within a study, we did not include that study under those particular categories. We categorized sampling techniques into the following: paid participation, course credit, volunteers, and no participants. "No participants" was used for commentaries that were not studies or any studies not conducted on human beings; studies in this category were therefore excluded from our review. Meta-analyses were also excluded because we wanted to focus solely on independent projects currently being conducted and published. We further categorized based upon whether the study reported using a college-based sample or non-college-based samples, such as community-based or special populations. Whenever available, average age of participants was also included.

We looked at the total number of participants per study, and whenever the information was given, we included gender and race/ethnic breakdowns. The gender and race categories we used were as follows and were based upon what was presented in the studies as available categories: male, female, Caucasian, African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic, American-Indian, Gay/lesbian (category dropped because no studies included this information), multi-ethnic, and other ("other" was used when the racial/ethnic classification did not fit the aforementioned categories). Because so few of the studies actually report demographic data beyond number of participants, the actual amount of diversity cannot be known.

**Results**

Most of the research reviewed was conducted in the United States so we compared our results with the most recent census information about the population of the US. The US Census Bureau (2000) indicates that about
30 percent of the US population list themselves as being non-Caucasian, and that both African Americans and Hispanic Americans represent almost 13% of the US population each. If psychology is to be representative, one would expect to see similar levels in the research samples. Additionally, the census data indicate that only 24.4% of the US population has attended college or graduate school. If results indicated that most research is using college samples, then psychology is looking at an even smaller portion of the population (the 24.4% represents all college attendees, not merely current students). In order to show who is being studied in the aforementioned journals, we present our findings in terms of percentages in categories within the total number of participants from the reviewed studies.

To gain an understanding of who psychologists are studying, we need to see where they get their samples and what means they use to get those samples. Our calculations show that much of the current research relies on college samples and on the use of course credit as a means for obtaining participants. While there are differences between journals in use of course credit (PWQ uses this 43% of the time, while JESP uses it 71% of the time), there is no denying that research relies heavily on this form of sampling. Additionally, much of the volunteered and paid research is still being conducted with college samples: JPSP = 89%, PSPB = 89%, PWQ = 54%, and JESP = 94%. The average age of participants (when reported, collapsed across journals) is approximately 23.6 years old. So, this indicates that much of the research in these prominent journals is exclusively using young, college-based participants.

We wanted to determine if the populations being used are diverse in terms of race and gender. The percentage of studies never mentioning gender are as follows: JPSP = 24%, PWQ = 3%, PSPB = 16%, JESP = 30%. The percentage of studies never mentioning race/ethnicity are as follows: JPSP = 76%, PWQ = 14%, PSPB = 74%, JESP = 83%. When comparing total number of participants in all studies to “mentioned” diversity, journals had the following percentages of non-Caucasian participants: JPSP = 3%, PWQ = 10%, PSPB = 7%, and JESP = 2%. In Table 1, we have included the percentage of “mentioned” race and gender per journal, broken down by category. We found no studies that listed populations in terms of multiple categories (meaning studies that reported gender or race did not indicate wherein those categories overlapped, such as women of color).

Because many studies gave only the total number of participants and did not include demographic information on their participants, these percentages represent how little we know about who is being researched.
and how little attention is being paid to the diversification of participants in psychological research. However, the trends indicated by those studies reporting demographic information demonstrate a great lack of diversity.

**Discussion**

Our research indicated that there is a lack of representation of women of color in current social psychological research. While there are some limitations with our research, in that we only reviewed studies from a few journals with a specific focus for a short time period, this research demonstrates that there is a documented lack of representation of women of color in current psychological research, particularly social psychological research. These findings should increase awareness of the need to ensure the use of a diverse population in our research, as well as the generalizations derived from this research. Studies like ours are merely a first step in negotiating the transition between who psychology is currently studying and who psychology needs to be studying, especially regarding representativeness and inclusion of intersections of multiple identities. More research must be conducted on the field, such as in areas of clinical, cognitive, and developmental psychology, to increase our knowledge about the gaps in our research populations.

There are several obstacles to a more diverse representation in both the topics/content and the participants in psychology. One issue involves reporting practices for demographic information. Researchers are not required to include demographic information if it is not a central theme of their research. When information is reported, membership in multiple categories is not included. These practices make it difficult to determine the representativeness of research populations, and make invisible research practices, such as exclusive use of white, middle-class college samples, that make generalizations to larger populations inappropriate.

Additionally, as Kite, Russo, Brehm, Fouad, Hall, et al. (2001) discuss, recruitment of and sustained participation by women in academia present serious problems. Once in academia, women continue to face discrimination, stereotyping and biases. The same applies to women and men of color. “Women are half the population: one out of three persons in the United States is a person of color, and within the next 50 years the figure will rise to 1 out of 2 persons” (US Census, 1992 as referenced by Kite et al., p. 1080). It is important that both men and women in academia combat this problem by conducting studies on women, women of color, men of color, and so on. This is not something that can be done without the cooperation and involvement of male researchers, making it important
to involve them in conversations about inclusive research design, intersectionalities of identity, and the discrimination within the academia.

Another obstacle is getting researchers to include topics of diversity and non-white populations as their subjects of study without pandering to sexist/racist/stereotypic assumptions. Demos (1990) indicated that when minority groups are studied, the studies may be biased to assume deficit or negativity. According to Azibo (1998), when people of color are studied, they are often referred to in relation to white comparison groups which are seen as the norm (and therefore any other group is away from the norm). Azibo indicates a need to recognize proper and improper usage of racial comparisons, for example:

1. It is proper to make racial comparisons using the comparative research framework when the racial groups are equated on all relevant variables, especially that of culture
2. It is improper if the racial groups are not equated on any relevant variable to do more than describe or report the difference; and
3. Whenever constructs are employed in the research, culture will be relevant (p. 84-85)

Researchers should shoulder the responsibility to include minorities in their research populations and to understand the need to focus on minority populations without requiring a white comparison group. Researchers also need to fully report information on who they are including in their studies, as well as the ways in which demographics intersect, because membership in multiple categories is relevant to understanding the experiences and identities of participant populations. One suggestion might be to encourage journals to standardize the way in which demographic data is presented by requiring all researchers to include information about the race, gender, and socioeconomic status of their participants.

Researchers also need to consider how research questions impact women of color. The following are some suggestions for how to avoid asking inappropriate research questions (adapted from the Herek, Kimmel, Amaro, & Melton, 1991).

1. Does the research question ignore or deny the existence of women, minorities, or a culturally diverse population?
2. Does the research question devalue or stigmatize women, people of color, minorities, or members of other cultures?
3. Does the research question reflect cultural stereotypes of women, people of color, minorities, or members of other cultures?
4. Does the research question implicitly assume that observed characteristics are caused by the subjects’ race, gender, or ethnicity?
Other suggestions for improving diversity in research can include looking outside of the college or university to utilize more community based samples, and collaborating with researchers who have access to different populations. Applying for grants can also be beneficial as grants often encourage or require researchers to utilize diverse populations in research.

Psychology appears to have become dependent upon the use of college participants regardless of the appropriateness of the sample. The key is to think about the research goal and ask what population is best for that goal. By paying attention to how we conduct research, we can then make gains in the diversity of participants and answer questions that are needed in psychology today.

The current standard of participant usage reinforces the idea that privileged white individuals are the norm and that anything extant to that norm is deviant. It is time that the field of psychology catches up to the progress made by the Women’s Movement and the Civil Rights Movement and acknowledges the need for a psychology of humanity, not just a psychology of a limited portion of the population. The message we are sending is one of the utmost importance as the field of psychology truly needs a revolution when it comes to the use of participants.

References


Trends in Participant Representation (Or the Lack Thereof)

(Eds.), Gender, Culture, and Ethnicity: Current Research About Women and Men (pp. 336-352). London: Mayfield Publishing.


Table 1: Percentage of Mentioned Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>JPSP*</th>
<th>PWQ</th>
<th>PSPB</th>
<th>JESP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-American</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiethnic</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A study was deemed an outlier and dropped from all JPSP data because it alone counted for more diversity than in the other studies combined.*
MODELS FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH WITH LOW-INCOME WOMEN OF COLOR IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS

ROBERTA A. DOWNING, PH.D.

Abstract

In this chapter, I aim to highlight ways in which feminist research in psychology would benefit from utilizing community-based research paradigms. The majority of existing research in psychology rarely involves studies that are conducted in collaboration with communities. However, these methods are crucial for documenting the realities behind the lives of women of color including gender, race, and class-based oppression. By speaking to women in their communities as part of long-term, collaborative researcher-community partnerships, feminist researchers can document the truths of women’s lives in ways that would not be possible with any other paradigm.

While feminist psychologists are increasingly focusing on the lives of women of color (Landrine, 1995), this group is still severely underrepresented in psychological research. Furthermore, little attention is paid to issues of social class and poverty (Reid, 1993; Saris & Johnston-Robledo, 2000). Community-based research provides a critical means for addressing this gap.

In this chapter, I describe the current status of women of color in the United States and discuss the various models that exist for conducting community-based research. These models could be used to powerfully elucidate the true lived experiences of women of color, in collaboration with women of color. I argue that a movement towards community-based research by feminist psychologists can serve as a critical tool that can make immediate differences in the lives of low-income women of color.

Women of color remain disproportionately low-income and underrepresented in societal positions of power as we begin the 21st century. The 2000 census reported that women of color (i.e., African American, Latina, Asian American or Pacific Islander, and Native American or Alaskan Native) represent 15% of the U.S. population (U.S.
Census Bureau, 2000). Yet, in government, only 22 out of the 535 Members of Congress were women of color (4%) after the 2006 election. All are serving in the House of Representatives and no women of color currently serve in the United Senates. No woman of color has ever served on the Supreme Court and women of color are similarly locked out of positions of power in business. A study by Catalyst documented that in 2007, only 3% of Board of Director positions were held by women of color at the 337 Fortune 500 companies from whom they collected data (Catalyst, 2007).

Not only are women of color underrepresented in American society’s traditional seats of power, they tend to bear a disproportionate burden of suffering in this country. Women of color are more than twice as likely to be living in poverty as white women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). In 2006, 11% of Asian American women, 24% of Latinas, and 27% of African American women were living below the poverty line, i.e., earning less than $20,614 for a family of four (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007) compared to 10% of white women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Poverty-level conditions increase exposure to stressful events including crime and violence, illness and death of children, imprisonment of male partners, threatening and uncontrollable life events, and discrimination (Belle, 1990). These indicators demonstrate the slow progress that has been made towards greater equality for women of color. They also illustrate how gender, race, and social class intersect to influence the status of women in the United States. It is impossible to address the lives of women of color without also discussing social class and poverty.

Given the exclusion of women of color in positions of power, feminist psychologists have an obligation to document the ways in which poverty and exclusion impact the lives of low-income women of color. In providing such information, feminist psychologists can discover insights and life experiences that our field has historically overlooked. Community-based research provides a powerful means for uncovering such realities as it can highlight where power lies in societies, as well as elucidate the barriers to accessing such power. In conducting research in collaboration with communities, social scientists can capture the consequences of structural inequality in ways that are not depicted in mainstream psychological scholarship.

**Methods for studying women’s lives**

Mainstream psychology has maintained an androcentric bias toward positivistic, “scientifically rigorous” methodologies such as experiments and survey studies. Such scholarship has often ignored women and failed