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## The Misogyny of Psychology: A Tribute to Women Often Overlooked

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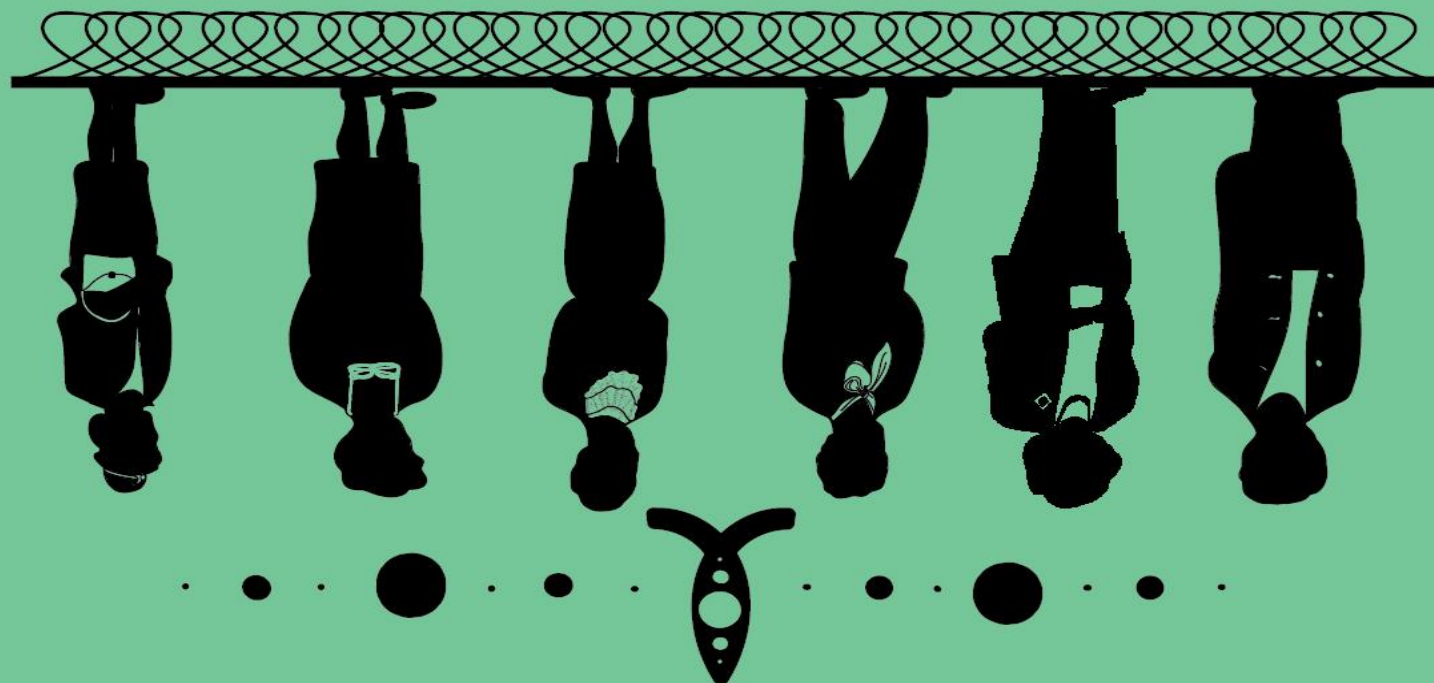
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# MISS REPRESENTATION IN PSYCHOLOGY

by Gabrielle Miller



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# Preface

The basis for this project stemmed from my passion for spreading positive energy. Additionally, my altruistic values provide me with a strong sense of duty to do the right thing at the same time that I believe it is my responsibility to help others, especially because I have been afforded the luxury of a college education although many others do not share this privilege. Under those circumstances, I wanted to speak on the issue of unequal representation of diverse identities, with special attention to the branches of science which historically refused to give due credit to individuals other than straight, white men. More specifically, I wanted to call attention to misogynistic past of the field of psychology.

It is especially important for me to achieve this goal by manner of shedding light on pivotal female psychologists and their extraordinary contributions to the field considering the intersections between my identity as a woman and as a psychology student. With that in mind, my hope is that this assortment of short biographies will inspire young ladies to pursue their goals regardless of social barriers produced by gender bias and harmful stereotypes. I want to show them that if other women made serious and valuable headway in what were typically considered male-dominated fields in the past, they can too.

The Author

## **Mary Whiton Calkins (1836-1930): “Self” Psychology**

Mary Whiton Calkins was one of the first female members to be elected into the American Psychological Association (APA). Twelve years later, in 1905, she was elected to be president of the APA, making her the first female to head the organization following thirteen male predecessors. Equally important, Mary Whiton Calkins was elected president of the American Philosophical Association in 1918 for her various accomplishments and contributions to the field.

Unfortunately for Calkins, women were not taken seriously in the field of psychology during her time in university and so despite being renowned for her academic skills, primarily in philosophy-related studies, and ability to run a laboratory for experimental psychology at Wellesley College, she was barred from formally enrolling in a Ph.D. program at Harvard.

In spite of this sexist restriction, Calkins continued her studies under Hugo Münsterberg, the head of Harvard’s psychology laboratory, whom later served as one of the members of her examining committee alongside William James, Josiah Royce, and Professors Palmer, Harris, and Satayana during an unsanctioned doctoral examination. Be that as it may, Harvard University once again denied Calkins the opportunity to earn a Ph.D. on the basis of sex.

Calkins and colleagues continued their efforts to convince Harvard University to grant her with the Ph.D. that she so deserved. Although she and three other distinguished women were offered doctoral degrees from the undergraduate women’s college associated with Harvard, Radcliffe College, Calkins turned it down for fear that if she compromised and thus accepted this proposition, Harvard may never award women with such status. Under those circumstances, thirteen alumni of Harvard University, including prominent psychologist E.L. Thorndike, petitioned that Calkins be granted her Ph.D. only to be met with denial.

To date, attempts to have Harvard award Calkins with a Ph.D. remain ongoing in spite of her passing in 1930. In recent years, women are fighting for Calkins right to such prestigious academic recognition, among them psychologist Kathryn Boatwright who, along with the help of her students, not only wrote a yet another petition to Harvard University, but also created a website to raise awareness to this issue in 2002.

## **Melanie Klein (1882-1960): Psychoanalytic Perspective**

Melanie Klein made pioneering contributions to the psychoanalytic approach without receiving any formal training from a university. As an illustration, she was the first person to use traditional psychoanalysis with young children. At that time, the notion that children can and should be analyzed was unheard of and therefore Klein was met with controversy for fear that probing too deeply into the unconscious part(s) of a child's mind would result in dire consequences.

In her view, children project their innermost feelings and unconscious motives through various kinds of play. Correspondingly, she developed a form of therapy which aims to provide children young children with a way to openly express themselves through the naturally occurring and self-guided healing process that is play.

A point often overlooked, Klein modernized the well-known Object Relations Theory, proposed by psychologist Karl Abraham, by arguing that the unconscious drive discussed in traditional Freudian psychology was focused a principle object, or part of an object, such as the mother or perhaps just her breast. In other words, she narrowed the theoretical scope of objects relations to include parts of a greater whole.

It is important to note that objects, as referred to in this context, typically are described as people or physical items that symbolically represent people. Under those circumstances, object relations are simply the relationships to those people or items. Klein coined the term "part objects" to call attention to specific parts of development which significantly impact the child, such as breastfeeding.

By the same token, Klein provided valuable insight into the field of psychology concerning the perspective of the mother, owing to her unique personal experiences that many male psychologists before her could not relate to for obvious reasons. Put differently, she introduced the mom factor into the developmental course of an infant.

Although Klein achieved great success in the field of psychology, it was not without considerable sacrifice particularly as a result of being a woman. For example, before getting involved with psychoanalysis Klein originally intended on studying medicine in the hopes of becoming a psychiatrist like her father, but instead married at a young age to alleviate some of the financial stress that his death brought upon her family at the time.

Despite being unhappy in her marriage, it was extremely hard for a woman to obtain divorce especially considering that, like the majority of women at the time, Klein was financially dependent on her husband. Even so, over the course of her scholarly pursuits, she ended up a divorced, single mother of three daughters who had to work tirelessly to defend her reputation as a psychoanalyst after Anna Freud entered the realm of psychoanalytic theory.

## **Karen Horney (1885-1952): Feminist Psychology**

Karen Horney is thought to have founded the theoretical orientation of Feminist Psychology in response to her belief that differences between men and women originate from socialization processes and cultural factors as opposed to biological predispositions. In fact, she was the first woman to showcase a paper on various social, economic, and political issues women are faced with at an international conference in response to the more traditional, androcentric theories of psychology proposed by men, namely Sigmund Freud.

From an early age, Horney came second to men. Her father favored her older brother and routinely made disparaging comments regarding her appearance and intellectual ability. Consequently, she made the decision to pursue a degree in medicine to display her smarts.

She struggled with depression and eventually sought psychoanalytic treatment to help her cope with the death of both parents following the birth of her first daughter. Interestingly, Horney's analyst, Karl Abraham, then became her mentor at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society where she helped design their training program and worked as a psychoanalyst in private practice. In addition to her hospital work, she also taught students at the Society and conducted her own psychoanalytic research.

Horney was of the mind that lifelong growth is within human capacity, yet this was not the only difference between her approach to psychology and that of Sigmund Freud. In contrast to Freud's concept of penis envy, Horney introduced the notion of womb envy which posited that men pursue social power because they lack the ability to perform the same biological functions as women such as giving birth and therefore men respond by forcing women into a socially inferior status.

Through taking an intersectional perspective, it can be seen that Horney's roles as a woman, mother, wife, psychologist, and doctor equally contributed to her motivation to investigate female sexual development. Given these points, it is no wonder that her knowledge about human growth and self-actualization coupled with her focus on social forces that continuously oppress women inspired the work of humanistic psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow.

## **Leta Stetter Hollingworth (1886-1939): Educational Psychology**

In the grand scheme of things, Leta Stetter Hollingworth overcame numerous institutional barriers to challenge the misogynistic standards of society through her contributions to the educational field and the domain of psychology. In truth, she was a remarkable woman right from the start considering she studied at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln while only 15 years old.

Hollingworth earned a teaching certificate in addition to a degree in literature, with the hope that she could share her knowledge with others. Be that as it may, the sociopolitical climate of the time made it so that married women were not allowed to teach regardless of their qualifications and thus Hollingworth was forced into the role of a housewife. As one might expect, she became bored from being unable to pursue her career aspirations. Fortunately, though, she was able to conduct a research study alongside her husband Harry Levi Hollingworth which, in turn, allowed her to go back to school to earn her master's degree in education. Not long after this accomplishment, Hollingworth was hired to administer the Binet Intelligence Test. For those unfamiliar with this assessment, it measures five elements of cognitive ability, namely, fluid- and quantitative-reasoning, knowledge, working memory, and visual-spatial processing.

Shifting her focus to educational psychology, Hollingworth then studied under prominent psychologist E. L. Thorndike. Her main objective at this point in her academic career was to disprove the variability hypothesis on the grounds that, in reality, males are not genetically superior to females, rather they are the socially favored sex which thereby permits them to occupy the highest-ranking and most valued roles in society. With this in mind, she collected ten anatomical measurements of 2,000 infants to compare the differences between males and females and subsequently discovered that neither sex exhibited greater inherent variability.

Eventually, Hollingworth went on to complete her dissertation on women's psychological experiences during menstruation so as to address the erroneous notion that women had mental incapacities as a consequence of that time of the month. She compared men's and women's scores across a battery of tests measuring participants' ability to perform well on various cognitive, perceptual, and motor tasks. It is important to note here that she administered these tests every day for a total of three months and so referring to her as dedicated to her academic pursuits is an understatement.

Notwithstanding her other contributions to the field of psychology, Hollingworth is most renowned for her studies involved "gifted" children—a term which she coined. Throughout her work with this population, she advocated that these children, contrary to popular belief at the time, should follow structured lesson plans and need not be expected to perform academic tasks on their own nor be socially isolated from their peers. In this way, Hollingworth argued that having a higher capacity for learning does not take away the fact that these individuals are children and henceforth require the same amount of guidance as their classmates. By and large, it can be seen that she helped shape modern teaching methods and standard educational practices.



## **Inez Prosser (1895-1934): Educational Psychology**

Despite an unstable home environment due to constant uprooting, Inez Beverly Prosser was a driven young woman. In 1910, she was recognized as valedictorian of her graduating high school class. Shortly thereafter, she completed a teaching certificate program at a local college and began work immediately.

Prosser spent her time teaching at nearby colored elementary and high schools and decided to pursue a master's degree in education. Alas, African Americans were prohibited from earning a graduate degree in her home state of Texas; luckily she found a loophole and enrolled in a program through the University of Colorado, which unsurprisingly had only awarded one previous degree to an African American woman three years prior to her enrollment.

Since she had not obtained a bachelor's degree before her acceptance into a master's program, Prosser was forced to take undergraduate classes over the summer months during her time in graduate school. As part of her thesis, she developed four different tests to measure participants' level of mastery in English grammar.

Following the conclusion of her research, she posited that a researcher could employ various categorizations of assessment measures to observe and record different skills. She earned her Master of Arts degree in Education in 1927. Upon graduation she resumed work as a teacher, instructing courses in Education and Psychology. Over time, she was given increasingly more responsibilities which ultimately led her to serve as principle of a high school just outside of Jackson, Mississippi.

Prosser did not stop there. She applied for funding so that she could complete doctoral research. The focus of her dissertation was on non-academic variables between integrated and segregated schools. In other words, she wanted to compare African American children in mixed-race schools and all-black schools on dimensions such as self-esteem, social adjustment, and other personality variables. Through her research, she found that African American students were better adjusted and thus did better in segregated schools. This research made her the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. in the field of psychology in the United States.

A little-known fact about Inez Prosser is that she financed the educational pursuits of all ten of her siblings, which ensured that they would receive, at minimum, a high school diploma. Half of her siblings then went on to earn college degrees due to her encouragement and continued financial support. Perhaps this is because it was unheard of for a woman to be successful enough to achieve such status, let alone further the education of the rest of her family.

As can be seen, Prosser did not adhere to her predetermined social script, instead she overcame every obstacle in terms of racist and gendered barriers to contend with the issue of limited representation in the field of psychology.

## **Anna Freud (1895-1982): “Ego” Psychology**

When it comes to the name Freud, most of us will readily agree that the first person which comes to mind is Sigmund Freud. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of why his youngest daughter, Anna Freud, is not equally recognized as a noteworthy psychologist despite her pioneering contributions to psychoanalysis. Although her interest in psychology initially stemmed from her father’s work, Anna Freud certainly made a name for herself in terms of expanding upon the psychoanalytic theory with respect to the development of defense mechanisms within the conscious mind, and thus deserves ample recognition.

Like many other brilliant women in this book, Anna Freud got her start by completing teacher training and worked in a classroom for five years. Even so, she found this work to be unfulfilling and hence returned home to receive instruction on traditional psychoanalysis from her father and his colleagues, a unique opportunity that would later contribute to her overall success in the field.

Following her presentation regarding the results of her father’s psychoanalysis, which featured Anna as its main subject, to the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society, she accepted a teaching position at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Training Institute. Shortly thereafter, she served as the Secretary of the International Psychoanalytical Association from 1927 to 1934 and published her most eminent text *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*. She also founded the Hietzing School alongside two of her closest friends so as to create a learning environment centered around psychoanalytical principles.

As can be seen, Anna Freud had a vested interest in the well-being of children. This was made especially apparent during World War II when she opened a nursery to care for orphaned children who found themselves without a home. Consequently, she was able to observe how the psychological stress and physical separation as a result of the war affected these children. She closed the nursery after the war but continued to focus on children in her work. Through her studies, she discovered that a key component to psychologically assessing children is their age and capacity for normal versus pathological development as opposed to their presenting symptoms. Under those circumstances, she recognized that although children go through normal developmental stages, they require different psychological treatment than adults.

Remarkable as her achievements were, it is important to note that Anna Freud accomplished these feats without any educational guidance outside of her father’s instruction. To put it succinctly, she did not receive formal scientific training. Although this may be true, she was awarded several honorary doctoral degrees from various universities to commend her work. Correspondingly, Queen Elizabeth II appointed her Commander of the British Empire in 1973 for her momentous contributions to psychoanalytic child psychology.

It follows, then, that the moral of her story is to create your own destiny. In other words, do not try to live up to expectations laid out by society such as a name you have been given, rather pursue your passion and make a name for yourself.

## **Mary Ainsworth (1913-1999): Developmental Psychology**

Ohio-native, Mary Ainsworth was eager to absorb information from the very beginning. She thoroughly enjoyed reading and learning and so it is no wonder that she was so successful. In fact, she was one of four individuals to complete an honors degree in psychology from the University of Toronto in 1929. She then graduated from the same university's Ph.D. program ten years later.

Ainsworth was given the opportunity to interview for an experimental psychologist position at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario with the intention of establishing a new laboratory course. Although she impressed the head of the psychology department, despite downplaying her talents as a result of preferring to remain in Toronto, she was denied the position on the condition that the university Senate would not have a woman in such a role. For this reason, coupled with the outbreak of World War II, she was permitted to teach at the University of Toronto where she worked for three years until she joined the Canadian Women's Army Corps in 1942.

She resumed teaching at the University of Toronto four years later. Not long after, she married a graduate student at the university and subsequently moved to London, England to escape prejudice surrounding student-instructor relationships. It was here that she was introduced to psychiatrist John Bowlby, whom she began to collaborate with on analyzing the effects of caregiver separation on children and their ensuing personality development. In this way, she continued her previous work on attachment theory as inspired by former colleague William E. Blatz.

When she returned to the states from researching mother-infant relationships in Africa, she worked as a lecturer at John Hopkins at the same time that she opened a private practice for children. She admitted that while she did not experience gender discrimination in her role instructing and supervising students, she unfortunately received significantly lower pay than men working at John Hopkins until affirmative action resolved the issue years later.

In 1963, Ainsworth was recognized as a full professor; a full year after beginning her most famous research. She devised the Strange Situation experiment to examine infant attachment and exploratory behavior in conditions of varying levels of stress. It was through this procedure that she discovered three attachment styles: secure, anxious-avoidant, and anxious-resistant. Equally important, she was the first to make the observation that securely attached infants best thrive throughout development and thus her recommendation for mothers' to promptly attend to their child's needs, especially for food, changed professional advice given to parents by doctors from then on. Be that as it may, Ainsworth advocated for mothers to do as they see fit for their children and insisted that as long as they properly attend to the needs of the child it should make no difference whether they remain a homemaker or enter the workforce. In other words, she emphasized establishing a secure infant-mother attachment over fulfilling the traditional female role of stay at home mom.

Generally speaking, Mary Ainsworth is a testament to female scientific minds and her contributions to psychology as well as the greater women's movement should not be overlooked.

## **Bernice Neugarten (1916-2001): Adult Development & Aging**

Bernice Neugarten was a bright young mind and eager student. She was so intellectually gifted, in fact, that she graduated high school when only 15 years old. Her determination to go above and beyond what was academically required allowed her to earn an M.A. in educational psychology at the age of 21. Given these points, it is no wonder that she was offered an assistantship for a Ph.D. program by the Committee on Child Development in Chicago, Illinois. Of course, she accepted this position and eventually became the first individual in the entire world to graduate with a Ph.D. in the broader context of human development in the year 1943.

As part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in human development, the Committee on Child Development decided to instate mandatory courses on different developmental periods in addition to the typical classes about childhood and adolescence shortly after Neugarten graduated. Under those circumstances, the Committee requested that she instruct a course on maturity and old age which she later renamed “Adult Development and Aging”. This was the first course of its kind and its establishment subsequently inspired other universities to include similar classes on aging which are now mainstream.

It follows, then, that the majority of her professional research endeavors centered around adult development and the aging process, which had not been adequately examined up to this point in time. Her findings challenged several stereotypes surrounding the elderly and ultimately proved them wrong. Neugarten emphasized the diversity of aging and believed that later life was even more variable than childhood. In this way, she argued that social clocks determined aging as opposed to the notion of a universal biological clock. To clarify, Neugarten posited that cultural variations in attitudes and beliefs about aging influenced age norms more so than physical experiences because no two people are the same. As an illustration, she categorized two groups of the elderly based on their level of competency and behavioral tendencies rather than their chronological ages.

With this in mind, Neugarten was a strong proponent of adapting social benefit qualifications to account for financial need instead of depending solely on an individual’s age. Along the same lines, she helped pass the Social Security Reform Act in 1983 and despite the controversy, continued working toward what she called “intergenerational equity”.

All things considered, Bernice Neugarten is a woman of distinction provided that she took a genuine interest in making life better for the older adult population when no one really seemed to give them a second thought at the time. For this reason, coupled with the underlying issue of unequal gender representation in the field psychology, it is tragic that the contributions made by Neugarten must be discovered through biographical research and instead of being a part of modern curriculum to demonstrate to current female students that there is always room for innovation regardless of academic focus.

## **Mamie Phipps Clark (1917-1983): Developmental Psychology**

Daughter of a doctor and a homemaker, Mamie Phipps Clark lived a typical childhood. She graduated high school at the age of 17 and was offered several scholarships. Among the universities that presented her with such opportunity was Howard University, a prestigious all-black school in Washington, D.C. where she chose to pursue higher education. At first, Clark declared her major in mathematics and minor in physics, but upon meeting her would-be husband, a masters student in psychology named Kenneth Clark, she was convinced that there would be more accessible employment opportunities if she studied psychology. It seemed like a good fit to Clark because, after all, she was interested in working with children.

After completing her undergraduate degree, she immediately enrolled in Howard University's psychology graduate program. Her master's thesis focused on the unique development of African American children's self-perception which is distinct from others on the condition that they belonged to a racial minority group. She concluded that children become aware of their so-called blackness as early as 4 or 5 years old. This work would later be in the vanguard of historic research to make racial segregation unconstitutional.

Clark returned to her academic career after a brief spell spent working in a law office to help fight racial oppression and segregation alongside prominent civil rights figures such as William Houston and Thurgood Marshall. She attended Columbia University and received her doctorate in 1943, making her the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. in psychology from this school. Her husband, Kenneth Clark, was the first black person to obtain such status from Columbia.

Unfortunately, Mamie Phipps Clark found it difficult to find work after graduation because people generally formed negative impressions of her and/or were intimidated by the idea of an educated African American woman. As a result, Clark opened the Northside Center for Child Development in 1946 to address the absence of proper social services for minority children and their families. This institution provided educational programs as well as comprehensive psychological services to less privileged populations.

A year later, she and her husband presented the results of their research what is now referred to as the Clark Doll test. The horrifying truth which was discovered through their study was that prejudice and racial segregation causes African American children to develop an internal feeling of inferiority which in turn lowered their self-esteem. The Clarks' findings were pivotal in terms of the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.

Mamie Phipps Clark was not only instrumental in bringing about changes to the field of psychology by shedding light on race-related identity issues caused by the experience of intersectionality, she also played a significant role in the larger civil rights movement. If it were not for her revolutionary work, the United States may have remained segregated and minority populations would probably have been increasingly oppressed in a manner similar to the not-so-distant past.

## **Janet Taylor Spence (1923-2015): Gender Psychology**

Janet Taylor Spence was born in Toledo, OH. Upon recommendation from her high school teachers, she attended Oberlin College to pursue an undergraduate education. Spence chose to study psychology because she was not sure what the subject entailed, and she wanted a challenge. As a result of university policy, she could not take introductory courses in psychology during her first year and so she decided to double major in political science in addition to psychology. Her hard work ultimately paid off and she graduated in 1945.

Alas, Spence would soon learn that it takes more than a bachelor's degree to have a successful career in psychology. For this reason, coupled with yet more recommendations from faculty members at Oberlin, she enrolled at Yale University. Her main interest lied in clinical work, provided that she was still unsure about the field of psychology with regard to what exactly it was comprised of. On the condition that Spence enrolled in graduate classes shortly after the war, most of her classmates were women. Thus, it never occurred to her that psychology was predominantly androcentric. By the same token, what she and her classmates failed to account for was the fact that despite pursuing graduate degrees in psychology, opportunities for employment would be limited because of their gender.

Spence left Yale to complete an internship and when that ended, she began to conduct experimental research at the University of Iowa alongside her would-be husband Kenneth Spence. It follows, then, that she earned her Ph.D. from the University of Iowa in 1949. Not long after, Spence was hired as an instructor at Northwestern University, making her the first female to achieve such status at said institution. While teaching at Northwestern University, Spence conducted several research projects with Kenneth and eventually the two were wed. The couple returned to Iowa after the wedding, but Spence could not work in the same department at the University of Iowa as her husband, so she accepted a position at the Veterans Affairs Hospital instead.

Although this may be true, her husband was soon offered a position at the University of Texas and so the couple moved. Again, Spence was not permitted to work in the psychology department at this university because of her husband, however, she was offered a position within the educational psychology department. Eventually, Spence was appointed chair of the psychology department after the sudden death of her husband. Her main objective in this position was to increase the amount of female faculty members at the University of Texas.

In the mid-1960s, Spence was introduced to gender psychology through an article she read. Needless to say, she connected with notion of investigating differences in men's and women's experiences, attitudes, and attributes and made it a point to shed light on the visibility of gender within the field. Under those circumstances, she developed the Attitudes Toward Women Scale to measure perceptions about the rights and/or roles of women across various educational, occupational, and relational settings. Given these points, Spence laid the groundwork for contemporary feminist activism in psychology.

## **Florence Denmark (1932- ): Feminist Psychology**

Florence Denmark was strongly encouraged to do well in school from the time she was little. Both parents set high expectations for her because they wanted her to be successful even though she was a woman. With their support, coupled with her individual determination, Denmark graduated valedictorian of her high school class. Her drive for academic excellence did not stop there. As an illustration, in college, she declared an honors double major in psychology and history.

Once she completed her undergraduate education at the University of Pennsylvania, she immediately enrolled in their graduate psychology program. Initially, she aimed to study clinical psychology but shifted her academic focus to social psychology after taking an introductory course on the subject. Spence was intrigued by the processes which individuals affect and are affected by one another during social interactions, especially in connection with gender-role attitudes and gender identity. She earned her doctoral degree in 1958 and subsequently worked part-time in order to start a family.

Although this may be true, her status as a married woman affected her role as an instructor at Hunter College in New York. In this way, Denmark received a lower salary than her male colleagues regardless of her Ph.D., research publications, and prior teaching experience. What is more is that the official title of Assistant Professor was exclusive to men at the time and so she was not properly recognized in terms of her academic prowess.

While working at the City University of New York in 1970, Denmark became the first person to instruct a class about the psychology of women within a doctoral program. Equally important, her membership in the Hunter College Women's Studies Collective granted her the opportunity to co-author the earliest textbook on women's studies in the United States which achieved publication in 1983.

Different from these pioneering accomplishments in the academic setting, Denmark bore the title president in several institutions including the New York State Psychological Association, the American Psychological Association's Division of the Psychology of Women (third individual to serve in this position), as well as the greater American Psychological Association itself (fifth woman to serve in this position). She also played a foundational role in the establishment of the Association for Women in Psychology, an organization created to manage concerns over issues of social stratification between the domains of feminism and psychology.

In view of these achievements, Florence Denmark demonstrated extraordinary leadership in preliminary feminist academia which ultimately gave rise to her valuable advancements to the field of psychology as well as what we now consider women's and gender studies. Henceforth, her contributions have had significant applications in contemporary educational programs centered around the intersectionality of gender, race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and so on and so forth.

## **Bonnie Strickland (1936- ): Gay & Lesbian Psychology**

Bonnie Strickland was no stranger to difficult situations and unfortunate events considering she was reared in the deep south by a single mother. Moreover, her family's low socioeconomic status coupled with her minority sexual orientation intensified her first-hand experience with marginalization. Be that as it may, these circumstances fueled Strickland's passion for human rights and social justice.

Strickland solidified her identity as a lesbian at the age of 16, however, she was convinced that it was wrong of her to express a romantic interest in women due to the damaging effects of homophobic attitudes portrayed in various forms of literature and media. Correspondingly, the rejection of and/or aversion to homosexuality displayed by the general population at the time caused her to keep this aspect of her identity hidden throughout her academic career.

Although she came from a working-class family, Strickland was able to pay her way through university by manner of waitressing in addition to the scholarship money she was awarded. Initially, she pursued a college education with the intention of becoming a physical education teacher but after one of her professors suggested that she explore the realm of psychology, she shifted her academic focus to the science of the mind.

After obtaining a graduate degree, Strickland was employed by Emory University as the Dean of Women, which meant that she was at the helm of female student affairs. During her time there, she continuously insisted that she did not fit into the campus climate. To take a case in point, she often brought male guests to university events in order to conceal her sexual identity as result of the heteronormative pressure given off by faculty and students alike. Even so, she began conducting research in respect to race-related issues and, in due course, became active in the Civil Rights movement. This distinction is important because Strickland drew connections from racial and ethnic minority groups' experience with prejudice and discrimination to her own life. By the same token, Strickland had a hand in the first large-scale study pertaining to lesbian individuals. The results of this research were published in 1969.

Shortly thereafter, she accepted a position at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. This environmental change provided Strickland with recognition as a full professor of psychology as well as sense of belonging that was nonexistent in her previous role at Emory. She took creative liberty in her new placement by developing what may well be the prototypal course on lesbian psychology, which was later included as a part of the general education requirement by the university. Strickland attributed the immediate success of the course to the fact that students in other marginalized groups could relate to her teachings in this class because of their similar experiences with discrimination.

Bonnie Strickland held several leadership positions, including but not limited to president of the American Psychological Association in the year 1987. In the end, her contributions to the field of psychology lend themselves to the integration of marginalized communities that were previously overlooked.



# Afterword

In discussions of the history of psychological science, one controversial issue has been dogmatism of misogynistic principles. On the one hand, members of the majority group argue there is no longer an issue considering many women are drawn to work in human services. On the other hand, however, experts contend that, as a society, we have come a long way over the course of the nineteenth century, but there is still much more to be done in this day and age for women and other minority groups to be seen as equal. My own view is that current students must address important social issues such as unequal representation in their career fields because we are the future and thus it is our job to recognize inequities and injustices and, consequently, work toward positive change. For this reason, we must be able to recognize and react quickly to social issues, otherwise we run the risk of perpetuating oppression of minority groups for the remote future.

One of the main catalysts which contributes to the problem of unequal representation is the deleterious portrayal(s) of gender in children's books. For one thing, male characters disproportionately appear as the protagonist in many texts. McCabe et al. (2011) complicate matters further when they write, "Not showing a particular group or showing them less frequently than their proportion in the population conveys that the group is not socially valued" (p. 200). Adding insult to injury, on the rare occasion that the central character of the story is a girl, she is oftentimes depicted as a fairytale princess or damsel in distress, which is by no means an accurate interpretation of the female condition. Different from the meek, passive, and obsequious role of the woman in children's literature, boys are generally seen as adept, confident, and illustrious. Kumar & Thaledi (2019) warn that "These stereotypes limit boys' and girls' freedom to express themselves and pressure them to behave in ways that are 'gender appropriate' rather than ways best suited to their personality" (p. 55). It follows, then, that visual representations of cultural norms and gender expectations lead children to value themselves to the degree which they see aspects of their identity represented in literature. This is important because such restrictive attitudes put a ceiling on their potential.

Another determinant of gender inequality in branches of science and related fields is deep-rooted societal stereotypes which promote misogynistic values. This is especially problematic considering "[...] young children's emerging notions about who is likely to be brilliant are one of the factors that guide their decisions about which activities to pursue" (Bian et al., 2017, p. 390). Although this may be true, teachers and parents can provide early intervention by selecting texts that are more inclusive of diverse identities so as to begin restructuring cultural attitudes and mitigate prejudicial and discriminatory beliefs through the next generation. Comparatively, some experts have noted that the recent feminization of psychology has led to increased awareness and evaluation of contemporary women's issues (Eagly et al., 2012). Be that as it may, minor improvements in this area do not add up to necessary changes that must be made to reinforce positive attitudes about females because society continues to usher women toward marriage and childrearing.

Finally, the combination of society's restrictions on women and subsequent internalization of gender bias stemming from harmful stereotypes has devastating effect of their perceptions of the

labor market. As an illustration, Correll (2001) writes, “When competence at a certain skill is thought to be necessary for a particular career, then gender differences in the perceptions of task competence, over and above actual ability, foster gender differences in commitment to paths leading to that career” (p. 1692). I agree that, for the majority of females, social pressures are more significant than personal belief systems in determining professional ventures due to my conversations with other college students. Under those circumstances, it is no wonder that women “[...] have lower expectations for pay (both initial and five-year) and promotion than their male counterparts even in this pre-career phase, regardless of their chosen field of study and their aptitude as measured by GPA” (Schweitzer et al., 2011, p. 435). Rather than penalizing institutions for this phenomenon with more policies and strict hiring practices, we should promote gender equity in the workplace which will, in turn, draw women into various positions within the company or organization. Nevertheless, women working in male-dominated fields who cling to weak gender identification can hinder the success of their female colleagues on the condition that they exhibit behaviors that suggest preferential treatment toward men (Kaiser & Spalding, 2015). The finding that men are not the sole perpetrator of gender bias as a result of misogynistic principles should be of interest to those who believe that patriarchal oppression has, at the very least, subsided because such attitudes have intensified to the point that women are turning against other women to further their own success in traditionally androcentric careers.

In any event, we must increase awareness of social issues because a profound shift away from old ways cannot occur unless people grasp the effects of the problem. Taking into consideration the distorted presentations of gender in children’s books, we must advocate for as well as make use of stories that feature unorthodox themes and include strong female characters. Correspondingly, pernicious stereotypes that affect females’ performance in educational, occupational, and relational contexts must be broken to restore their self-image and confidence in their abilities. By the same token, it is not enough to protest the sociocultural limitations placed on women. Instead, we must work toward positive change by manner of feminist reformation. Although the dogmatism of misogynistic principles in the history of psychology may seem trivial, it is in fact crucial in respect to the evolution of structural symbolic interactionism with regard to how society creates and collectively defines groups.

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# A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

“As with all other branches of science, psychology does not have a very inclusive history of identities other than straight, white men.

For this reason, I want to bring attention to the misogynistic history of the field of psychology and encourage future generations of women to challenge stereotypes and follow their aspirations in spite of previously established gendered barriers. Moreover, I want to provide a tangible resource for young girls which feature psychology professionals that look like them, even if the book focuses on historical figures.

In this way, young girls will be able to identify with these figures and thus be more likely to pursue a career in the field than if they were not exposed to such representation of identities that are often overlooked in psychology and other branches of science. In sum, I intend to empower young girls and affirm that they have something to offer.”

— *Gabrielle Miller*

