

SECTION 1

THE UNDERPINNINGS
OF SEX AND GENDER
AND HOW TO
STUDY THEM

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47303-3 — The Cambridge Handbook of the International Psychology of Women
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International and Intersectional Perspectives on the Psychology of Women

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BACKGROUND

Scientific research on the psychology of women reveals the intersectionality of women's experiences relative to those of men. There is a growing knowledge base in understanding the differences and similarities between women and men, as well as the diversities among women and sexualities. Although genetic and biological characteristics define human beings conventionally as women and men, their experiences are contextualized in multiple dimensions in terms of gender, sexuality, class, age, ethnicity, and other social dimensions. Beyond the biological and genetic basis of gender differences, gender intersects with culture and other social locations which affect the socialization and development of women across their life span. Parallel to the call from cross-cultural psychology to recognize cultural diversities, research on the psychology of women has challenged mainstream psychology by questioning its traditional assumptions of universality in psychological theories, methods, and knowledge base about human behaviors with more relevant implications to gender diversity. Similarly, the universal assumption of the psychology of women and sex differences would also ignore the diverse experience among women based on the intersection among sex, gender, sexuality, and social locations, thereby limiting the relevance of the restricted knowledge base.

International gender equality indices identify gaps in women's status relative to that of men in the domains of work, money, knowledge, time, power, health, violence, and intersecting inequalities (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017). The status of women varies across the world, with higher educational attainment, higher economic and public participation, and longer life expectancy for women in minority or developed countries than those in majority or developing countries (previously called "third world" countries; United Nations Development Program, 2018). Some of these achievements ride on the coattail of the countries' overall development. But despite the relative advances some women have made in countries with robust economies, even in these countries

they still earn less than men in virtually all job categories, are underrepresented in leadership positions in government and the corporate world, and are much more likely to be victims of sexual and domestic abuse. According to United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2018), the average Human Development Index for women is 6 percent lower than that of men. It is estimated that it could take over 200 years to close the economic gender gap across the world.

Gender inequity and discrimination are even more problematic in developing economies, and the Gender Development Index shows that these disadvantages are not correspondent with the countries' overall economic development (UNDP, 2018). Cultural norms, social structures, and religious beliefs constrict women's development and gender equality despite overall socio-economic development. In the southern Indian state of Kerala, 5 million women lined up to form a 620 km human chain in a mass demonstration for gender equality on January 1, 2019, in protest against the attacks on women who attempted to visit the Hindu temple after India's highest court overturned a historical ban on women of "menstruating age" (age 10–50), who are perceived as "unclean," from entering the state's Sabarimala shrine (*Time*, January 1, 2019). In June 2018, women in Saudi Arabia took the wheel legally for the first time after King Salman issued a decree to allow women to drive, lifting the world's only ban on women drivers (CNN, June 24, 2018). This followed years of campaign by women activists who have been jailed for challenging the ban. Saudi Arabia laws follow a strict interpretation of Sunni Islam that restricts the autonomy of women and bans the mixing of sexes at public events and places.

Gender disparity and inequity prevail in all cultures with common mechanisms. Gender analysis examines the ways in which these conditions differentially affect the needs, opportunities, and activities of women and men, as well as the outcomes in equal opportunities. Gender-sensitive interventions should also take into account these gender perspectives. Different disciplines

can contribute to the understanding of these mechanisms. Although there are biologically based sex differences that influence some psychological processes and outcomes, gender norms and roles affect the manifestations of many psychological domains as well as the experiences of physical, mental, and social well-being of women.

Traditional psychological research has been criticized for being gender blind. Chrisler and McHugh (2018) described the journey toward a gender-integrative psychology “in which gender can be a predictor of behaviors, motivations, and interests; women are considered as normal as men; and gender is fully integrated into research and theory. A truly gender-integrative psychology understands that all women (and all men) are not alike and takes intersectionality into account” (p. 71). The integration of a gender perspective also needs to address the social construction of gender inequality. Beyond describing individual and group differences on the basis of sex and gender, feminist psychologists have critiqued these social constructions and are identifying gender-relevant interventions.

The 12th Annual Psychology Day at the United Nations on April 25, 2019 has chosen “The time is now: Psychological contributions to global gender equality” as its title (Psychology Day at the United Nations, 2019; www.unpsychologyday.com/). The program focused on ways that psychologists may contribute to promoting the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #5: “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (United Nations, 2015; www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/). This event not only celebrated the contributions of psychology at the UN, but also called upon psychology to identify research strategies and programs to accelerate global progress toward SDG#5.

Gender mainstreaming has been advocated internationally as a strategy toward realizing gender equality by integrating gender perspectives into legislation, policies and practices. Mainstreaming gender perspectives should start with the epistemology and knowledge base on which these strategies are grounded. New research in psychology and gender studies in different parts of the world is providing a wealth of empirical evidence to inform the interplay of nature–nurture foundations as well as social identities based on social class, race, ethnicity, age, and other dimensions on gendered experiences of women. Cheung (2012) has called for mainstreaming culture in the internationalization of psychology, similar to the strategy of gender mainstreaming. An international handbook on psychology of women can provide a broader perspective and an up-to-date knowledge base to understand and explain the intersectionality of gender differences, to dispel myths, and to examine gender-relevant as well as culturally relevant implications and appropriate interventions.

Courses on the psychology of women and gender are now offered in major universities worldwide. However, most of the available books on the psychology of women are based on a Western perspective. International students and scholars may question the validity and relevance of

the theories and practices. In 2000, Marsella warned that “if psychology is to survive and grow as a profession and academic discipline, it is essential for it to be responsive to the changing world in which we live” (p. 70). He urged Western psychology to internationalize its curriculum so that psychologists can become familiar with non-Western and indigenous psychologies in order to develop the broader cultural competencies necessary to meet the challenges of our times. Even to date, most of the leading psychological publications rely on studies conducted with Western samples, with inferences generalized to represent all human beings. Rad, Martingano, and Ginges (2018) continued the call for making psychology representative of the human population, by examining “what aspects of human psychology are universal and the way that context and culture produce variability” (p. 11,401). This requires that we take into account the importance of culture and context in the way that we conduct our research, the types of populations that we sample, and the inferences we make in writing our papers.

In recent years, there is more research by international scholars and more cross-cultural psychology research on gender issues, but few are captured in the existing books on the psychology of women. A number of these books have invited international scholars to contribute to an overview of women’s or gender issues in their countries, but the international literature is not well integrated in the broad range of psychology topics. A new international handbook on the psychology of women is needed to represent the diversity of women’s experiences across national origins and multicultural contexts. Incorporating cross-cultural research and comparative perspectives on topics related to psychology of women will broaden the scientific foundation of these topics and present more culturally relevant evidence. Such a handbook will inform mainstream psychology of the international literature on gender issues, highlighting similarities and differences across cultures as well as the intersectionality of gender within and across cultures.

HOW WE ARRIVED AT THIS BOOK

We thank Janka Romero of Cambridge University Press for her persistence in persuading us to take on this Handbook. Janka first approached Fanny at the European Congress of Psychology in Milan in 2015 to write a handbook on the psychology of women. As with most women academics, we were already overloaded with multiple roles and responsibilities. Fanny hesitated to take on another commitment on top of her position as Vice-President for research in her university. On the other hand, the idea of the Handbook fits in her mission of mainstreaming culture in psychology as well as promoting women’s development by building up scientific evidence. She immediately thought of her good friend and co-author of an earlier book, *Women at the top: Successful leaders tell us how to*

combine work and family, Diane F. Halpern. The two of us collaborated seamlessly on writing that book. Both of us recognized the need for strengthening an international perspective in the psychology of women, and believed that an edited volume would cover a broader cultural spectrum. However, it took another year of earnest follow-up from Janka, who met with Fanny again at the International Congress of Psychology in Yokohama in 2016, before we decided to put forth a proposal for an edited volume to Cambridge University Press for a *Handbook of the International Psychology of Women*. Janka's support throughout the process was instrumental to the outcome.

How can we capture the breadth of international research about a topic as broad as the psychology of women? We pondered this question for quite some time to determine if such a goal is feasible. A short chapter on psychology of women from a single country is necessarily shallow and does not promote an integrated and deeper understanding of the scientific foundation of the specific topics. The contents do not provide a comprehensive coverage on the psychology of women. Instead we decided to draw up a comprehensive list of topics based on the general domains in psychology that are critical to understanding the gendered lives of women.

We attempted to identify a lead author and at least one or more co-authors from or familiar with a different region or culture in the world for each chapter. We realized that some regions of the world may not have enough high-quality psychological research to be represented, but we strived to get as broad a coverage as possible. We have not prescribed any theoretical ideology but would respect the authors' diverse orientations in approaching their topics. Within each chapter, we requested the use of available non-Western research on the specific topic to fill the gap in a cross-cultural perspective. Where relevant research is available, culture-specific aspects of the topic are featured to highlight the gender issues of concern to particular regions or cultural groups. Although the full range of international research could not be covered in every chapter, we believe that the diversity in the range of perspectives included in the chapters through the lenses of authors originating from different cultures would enrich the learning experience of readers.

By grounding the knowledge in each chapter on current research evidence, we want to demonstrate that psychology of women is a science at this critical juncture when some countries have begun to challenge the academic value of gender studies. For example, the Hungarian government removed gender studies from the list of accredited academic programs in 2018 as it was considered to be an ideology and not a science. In 2017, a pioneering gender studies scholar visiting Brazil for a conference she helped to organize was accosted by far-right Christian group protesters. The legitimacy of gender studies is frequently attacked by the press in Europe for being ideological and not scientific (Redden, December 5, 2018).

Beyond scientific facts and positivistic figures, the study of the psychology of women reveals the lived experience of the scholars themselves. Throughout the process of editing the book, we were witnessing the personal lives of authors that affect their participation – childbirth, personal and family illness or injuries, deaths of loved ones, job changes, and new work or family responsibilities. We acknowledge their commitment throughout our common journey despite these challenges. We can also glimpse their participation in social advocacy as well as the larger social political circumstances in which they are situated. These contexts illustrate how gender scholarship arises from the personal and the political. The women's movements in our times and locations impacted upon many of our authors as women and as psychologists. By recognizing the interaction of the objective and the subjective, we come to appreciate the richness behind the science of gender studies. These are also the contexts that shaped our commitment to this book.

WHERE WE CAME FROM

We began our friendship and collaboration arising from a sex discrimination court case in which the Equal Opportunities Commission challenged the secondary school places allocation scheme of the Education Department in Hong Kong at the turn of the century. We were on opposite sides of a hotly debated case. Fanny had just stepped down as the Founding Chairperson of the Commission whereas Diane took up the role of expert witness and consultant for the Education Department. Despite our opposite sides, we considered the fundamental pedagogic issues as psychologists and concurred on a more practical and amicable than an adversarial approach to the case. We shared the same conviction on promoting gender equality based on scientific knowledge. Our first collaborative project after the court case was the study of how top Chinese and American women leaders combined their work and family lives (Halpern & Cheung, 2008, Preface). We worked together seamlessly with mutual respect for each other's scholarship. In this new joint venture, we begin with the personal stories of our journeys.

FANNY (FMC)



I was born into a traditional Chinese extended family in Hong Kong under the British colonial rule and grew up with a large number of siblings and cousins living in the same house. This environment prepared me for observing and examining human relationships and interactions. Although boys were favored over girls in my patriarchal family, education was valued and supported

for all, fortunately. I was fascinated by the subject of psychology which was not yet offered in Hong Kong at the time. So I decided to pursue my studies in the United States. From 1966 to 1975, I attended Grade 12 in high school and college in California through my doctorate in Minnesota during the heyday of second-wave feminism.

Although regarded as a prominent Chinese feminist now, my feminist orientation evolved from my personal involvement with women's concerns after my return to Hong Kong, and bore little direct relationship to my American education. Given my Chinese cultural background that emphasized communality and harmony, I did not identify with what I considered as a binary and militant approach of the Western feminist movement at that time. Upon my return home in 1975, I first worked in a hospital in a working-class neighborhood. As I was the first and only female therapist they had in the psychiatric ward, my Chinese female patients opened up and revealed to me their unattended trauma from sexual assault. Spurred by the injustice witnessed at the individual and societal levels, I spearheaded the War on Rape campaign in Hong Kong in the late 1970s with an integrative community psychology approach to improve aftercare services, amend legislation to protect victims' rights and promote public understanding. Recognizing the unmet needs of women which were invisible to the government, I went on to establish the first community women's center in the 1980s to promote personal development and empowerment of grassroots women. In those days, it would be too stigmatizing for women to come to seek help from a community center for rape survivors. Besides, I thought we should project the agency of women rather than focusing on women as victims. We engaged the community to listen to and address their practical needs. Actually, I only learned these feminist concepts and terminology later on.

I was recruited to join the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1977 where I have stayed for most of my career life. As one of the few women academics in Hong Kong, I was invited to join a group of women scholars from several Asian countries to form a Committee on Women Studies in Asia to promote scholastic understanding of women's issues in the region (Cheung, 1994). Recognizing the need to build up the local knowledge base in women's advocacy, I rallied the interest and support of other colleagues to initiate the interdisciplinary Gender Research Centre and later the Gender Studies Programme at my university, the first ones in Greater China. We published many books and organized international conferences on gender issues in Hong Kong, China, and Asia. When I was invited by the government to serve as the Founding Chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Commission in Hong Kong from 1996 to 1999, I made it one of its strategic directions to build the research and training foundation which would guide the statutory functions of the Commission to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities (Cheung & Holroyd, 2009). I often had to

explain to skeptics why there should be equality when men and women are obviously different.

Despite the efforts by women scholars to build up the local and regional knowledge base in gender issues in many countries, there is a lack of gender mainstreaming in the basic courses in the different academic disciplines. Similarly, there is a lack of international perspectives in the gender studies courses and the textbooks that can be used. Post-colonial transition in Hong Kong from British rule to a "One-Country-Two-Systems" model under China has highlighted the divergence of social, cultural, and geopolitical values that underlie discourse in many life domains. My own works in culturally relevant psychopathology and assessment have steered me to advocate for the need of mainstreaming culture in psychology (Cheung, 2012). Through my involvement with international psychological associations, I have co-edited a couple of international handbooks, including one on applied psychology and another on testing and assessment. These editorial experiences convinced me of the value of an international handbook on the psychology of women, which can serve either as a textbook in its entirety or as individual chapters to supplement the references for relevant courses in psychology and other social sciences.

DIANE (DFH)



Diane's introduction to the psychology of women was through a back door. There were no such courses when I was an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania or when I received my Master's degree from Temple University. I don't think I ever heard the term "psychology of women" during these years of education in psychology. In my doctoral program at the University of Cincinnati,

I taught several undergraduate courses. One semester, I was scheduled to teach an honor's section of Introduction to Psychology at 8 a.m. Well, there were not enough students enrolled to offer that course so I got shuffled in the Teaching Assistant position in a psychology of women course. I was intrigued. I had not known that this was a "legitimate" area of study. After graduation, my first job, at the University of California, Riverside, required me to teach Psychology of Women, and I have taught this course more times than I can remember since then. At the same time, I taught courses in cognitive psychology, and the same questions came up in both classes. Were there really any differences between women and men in their intelligence or in separate areas of cognitive (e.g., visuospatial abilities or verbal abilities)? I have spent the last 37 years working on that question! More recently I was asked to head a group put together by the Association for

Psychological Science on the science and mathematics of cognitive sex differences (Halpern et al., 2007b). I also chaired a taskforce assembled by the Institute for Educational Sciences (US Government) to make empirically supported recommendations to encourage girls in science and math (Halpern et al., 2007a).

My major contribution to these areas of study is my textbooks entitled *Sex Differences in Cognitive Abilities* (2012), which have been revised numerous times. My research in this area has focused on many of the themes found in this volume: gender stereotypes (Halpern, Straight, & Stephenson, 2011), spatial abilities (Miller & Halpern, 2013), public policy implications (Halpern et al., 2011), variability in intelligence (Turkheimer & Halpern 2009), and recent syntheses of the research literature (Miller & Halpern, 2014).

NEED FOR AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE IN PSYCHOLOGY OF WOMEN

When Diane was in high school in the United States, two history courses were required of all public school students: US history and world history. At that time, world history was exclusively European history – it was as if no other region of the world existed. No other region of the world was worth knowing about. In the intervening years, the discipline of history has rectified its egocentric views. World history textbooks really do cover most of the world. But what about psychology? Modern psychology (mostly) follows this truncated model of the world. How can we have a psychology that strives to understand the mind, brain, and behavior if it routinely excludes most of the people on earth?

When Psychology of Women is taught as a course in universities in different parts of the world, most teachers would be using the popular American textbooks which have little coverage of non-Western experiences relevant to the local students. There may be questions whether some of the theories and research findings are applicable outside of Western contexts. Cross-cultural diversities have been well established in many fields in psychology, but they have not been incorporated in major textbooks.

While working on the *Cambridge Handbook of the International Psychology of Women*, we became painfully aware of how little we and most psychologists know, for example, about how Muslim women in non-Muslim countries decide whether or not to wear a hijab, or the way local traditions shape the experience of menopause, or the lives of legal sex workers in Bangladesh. These are among the many topics in this book. What are the consequences of these short-sighted practices in psychology and how can we begin to remedy them?

How Bad Is This Short-Sighted Problem?

In a recent article in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Mostafa Salari Rad, Alison Jane Martin-gano, and Jeremy Ginges (2018) gathered information to

answer this question. Their article entitled, “Toward a psychology of *Homo sapiens*: Making psychological science more representative of the human population,” paints a bleak picture. They start with this statement: “We begin this paper with the observation that two core goals in psychological science should be to understand human universals and the way in which context and culture produce variability” (p. 11,401). We cannot have a psychology of people, if we routinely ignore most people on earth.

We have a WEIRD problem. As you may know, WEIRD refers to the characteristics of most people who participate in psychological research. They are White, Educated, live in Industrialized countries, that are Rich and Democratic (Jones, 2010). This is not news. In 2010, an article in the *Monitor on Psychology* (Azar, 2010) urged researchers to get less WEIRD. Behind the almost exclusive use of WEIRD research samples was an implicit assumption that there was little variation across world populations (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). We believe that to have a psychology of all people, we need to look beyond our own borders.

So how successful has psychology been in reducing its WEIRDness?

To answer this question, Rad and his colleagues (2018) analyzed all empirical articles published in *Psychological Science* in the year 2014.

- 11 percent had no data on country or region of the world the sample was from.
- 58 percent were from the United States.
- 71 percent were from English-speaking countries.
- 94 percent sampled Western countries (including English-speaking countries, Europe, and Israel).

What about other characteristics of the samples?

- In most cases, the participants were young adults (mostly students) who participated offline for a fee.
- The percentage of undergraduates in non-American samples was 41 percent.
- As abysmal as these numbers are, they are much better than what was found in 1994 using the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* where the percentage of undergraduates as research participants was 67 percent.

For the most part, the issue of culture was ignored.

In short, in 85 percent of the samples in the last three issues of *Psychological Science* in 2017, the participants were representative of less than 7 percent of the people on earth.

Often, when talking with students and others about the need for an international perspective on the psychology of women, we are told that equality is no longer a problem. These were issues for our generation not theirs because now the lives of women and men are essentially the same. How little they know, and we are, in part, responsible for their lack of knowledge.

Do they know that at the current rate they will never live to see women reach parity on salary? According to the World Economic Forum (2018), it will take approximately

two centuries for women around the globe to achieve economic gender parity if the salary differential continues at the same rate of change as in the past.

Do they know the consequences of China's One Child policy that was in effect from 1979 to 2016? During this period significantly fewer girls were born than in other years and relative to boys. Where are the missing girls? As one set of chapter authors explain (Qu, Zhang, Kalindi, Yang, & Wang, Chapter 7) much of the difference in birth rates was probably due to sex-selective abortions. This incidentally resulted in a child-centered culture where girl children received more family resources than in previous historical periods. In 2014 there were 33 million more men than women in China. The abortion of mostly female fetuses is a drastic departure from Mao's talk about "glorious mothers" and his well-known slogan that "Women hold up half the sky."

Do they know that in households that depend on water collection off their premises, women and girls are primarily responsible for collecting the water in 80 percent of cases, an activity that can result in injuries while traveling back and forth to the water source, and exposes women and girls to risks of sexual violence (World Health Organization, 2017)? Furthermore, women in many parts of the world need the permission of a male relative to seek healthcare for themselves or their children, while men do not need any permission to seek healthcare. Do they know that, in Malawi, women on average spend more than 80 minutes daily collecting water, whereas men only spend 6 minutes on the same task (WHO, 2017)? This disparity affects women's opportunity for education and employment (Zhang and Gordon, Chapter 27). These are just a few facts that show the need for an international psychology of women.

RECURRING THEMES ACROSS CHAPTERS

Although each chapter addresses a major topic in the study of psychology of women, several recurring themes emerged across chapters.

1 There Are Many Deep-Seated Controversies

The field of the psychology of women is marked with many deep-seated controversies. Of course, we expected that this would be true. In our instructions to chapter authors, we asked that they acknowledge the major controversies in the topic they are writing about and that they explain why they support a particular side in the controversy, being as fair as possible to all sides. Many of the chapters were written by teams that have not worked together in the past and, in many cases, with others they have never met. In most cases, author teams were able to resolve controversies, although finding the appropriate language for supporting or failing to support a particular perspective was not always easy. In at least one case, this sort of

agreement was not possible. As you will see in the chapter that addresses similarities and differences between females and males in the organization and structure of the brain, we have, in fact, two separate chapters. After a long period of trying to reach a consensus, the authors decided that they could not endorse the position taken by the other co-author. One author made a strong case for minimal differences in the structure or use of various anatomical portions of the brain (see Chapter 5b), and the other made a strong case for moderately important differences in systems of connections among portions of the brain for females and males (see Chapter 5a).

The question of the extent to which female and male brains are similar and different is, in fact, highly political. It is tied to questions about sex-related differences in intelligence (see Chapter 10 by Halpern, Flores-Mendoza, and Rindermann for a discussion of this possibility) and in the biological underpinnings of female and male behaviors, thoughts, emotions, and actions. Readers are asked to read both chapters and consider, for themselves, what they believe to be more convincing and possibly find a middle ground to interpret and reconcile these two conclusions.

2 Neither Sex nor Gender Is Binary and They Never Were

We can no longer talk about females and males as though these are the only two categories that exist. Yes, most people are and always have been cisgender – a term that refers to people whose gender/sexual identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth based on the shape of their genitals. But there are too many other categories for modern psychology to ignore. Of course, there have always been intersex individuals (people whose genitals are not clearly male or female), transsexuals (people who believe that the sex they were assigned at birth is incorrect), people who are "gender-less," cross-dressers, and self-described "gender-queer" and other variations. There has always been a variety of sexualities, but, for most of the psychological literature, researchers mostly believed that the numbers of people who did not fit the cisgender norm were so small that we did not need to consider them in mainstream psychology. That is no longer true. A sign that the times really are changing is a 2014 change in policies in the United States concerning Medicare services. Medicare is a government-run insurance program for older adults. It is now possible to have transsexual surgical procedures covered by Medicare (Green, 2016). This is a significant change in healthcare policies in the United States.

3 Women Are Not Homogeneous

As already mentioned earlier in this chapter, to study women, or any other group of interest, including men, we need to take an intersectional approach. This approach requires us to think about people at the intersection of

many variables such as the socioeconomic status, race, sexuality, religion, age, geographical location, and more, the nature of the intersection depending on the question you are asking. For example, in our chapter on sex, gender, and sexuality, Byer and Blair (Chapter 4) make this point: “an intersectional approach necessitates also examining constructs of heterosexism, racism, classism, cissexism, ageism, and ableism to see how each, as well as their various combinations, might help to elucidate the varied realities across women of different demographics and backgrounds.”

With this approach it may be misleading to talk about women in a particular country or women of a particular age because there is so much variability in the lives of women, say in Mexico, or women at mid-age, or women with young children, or women with great wealth. To make this point Byers and Blair provide this example:

For example, in India, the intersections of socio-economic status, gender, and age combine to disproportionately place young women at risk for poor sexual health outcomes and even increased likelihood of death as a result of pregnancy or childbirth. Similarly, in most instances it is poor, Black, lesbian women who receive brutality and violence precisely because their status renders them triply vulnerable to victimization. From numerous research studies it is evident that certain groups of lesbian and bisexual women, such as Black and minority status women, experience greater victimization relative to White and middle-class women. Research on intersectionality often has emphasized how social identities intersect to create unique, stigmatized positions within a society, and as a result, multiple subordinate identities are lumped together.

4 There Are Multiple Meanings for Culture

Culture has been defined as “the belief systems and value orientations that influence customs, norms, practices, and social institutions, including psychological processes and organizations.” Culture is further described as “the embodiment of a worldview through learned and transmitted beliefs, values, and practices, including religious and spiritual traditions” (American Psychological Association, 2002, pp. 8–9). Cultural norms, social structures, and religious beliefs constrict women’s development and gender equality. Think of the research you regularly read or the studies that you and your students or professors conduct. How often do you/they consider culture in interpreting their findings or in their research plans? The cultural aspects of women’s lives need to be part of the psychology curriculum and embedded in our research questions and practices.

In a recent article in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (Brady, Fryberg, & Shoda, 2018), the authors admonish us to develop a psychology that recognizes people as “cultural beings whose histories, values, and experiences shape their understanding of what constitutes good or normative behavior and how they make sense of the world.” The authors “use the lens of

interpretive power – the ability to understand individual experiences and behaviors in relation to cultural contexts – to illustrate how instilling culture-conscious scientific norms and practices will improve psychological science” (p. 11,406). They urge us to abandon the belief that any one group can be used to generalize to all people. Psychologists need to develop “culture-conscious” research designs and recognize that much of what we consider “noise” in data analysis may be the effect of various cultures on our data.

One could do cross-cultural research in cities like New York and Los Angeles where people from all regions of the world come together – sometimes in harmony and sometimes not. Thus, for our Handbook, when we asked for writing teams composed of authors from different cultures, we did not define the term. Although a listing of the institutions where authors are currently employed may show little cultural diversity, in most cases the individual authors had different cultural experiences and backgrounds which may be reflected in their bio-sketches.

5 The Personal Is Political

Gender scholarship arises from the personal lives of women and men and it determines their political views. The women’s movements at our times and locations impacted us as women and psychologists. Women’s studies grew out of the lives of women, and of course also of many men. We do not want to minimize the contributions of these men who are allies for women and who helped shape our political climate for the better. We worked on this book for approximately three years. We worked with many incredible authors, and in doing so we realized that they are living the main themes in this book. Some of them shouldered a disproportionate share of the work of caring – for children, for elder parents and other seniors, and for ill colleagues, among others. They became pregnant and gave birth to the next generation with all of the hopes, prayers, and hard work that parents have had since the beginning of time. Their life events paralleled many themes in our book. They grieved over the death of loved ones, faced the all-consuming task of treating breast cancer, moved to accommodate a spouse’s career, cooked dinners, and taught, and wrote. Their personal lives shaped their political lives. As seen in several chapters, groups of women came together to change attitudes and behaviors relating to sexual assault or to preserve natural areas that local families rely on for their livelihoods. This is one of the themes running through this book.

6 We Need an Evidence-Based Understanding of People from Other Cultures to Inform Public Policies

Regardless of how you feel about contentious issues, public policy needs to be based on facts. Consider the deeply polarizing issue of abortion. According to Hindin

and OlaOloran (Chapter 33), global abortion rates are around 25 percent. During 2010–2014, the rate in countries where abortion is prohibited altogether or allowed only to save a woman's life was similar to the rate in countries where abortion is available on request (37 and 34 abortions per 1,000 women respectively). Abortion is just not safe when it is not legal – but there is very little effect on the number of abortions that are performed. Do these data change how you think about laws governing abortion? Do you think they should be relevant to lawmakers and policy analysts?

As we write this chapter, numerous countries around the world are dealing with the deeply contentious issue of immigration. Consider the mass of people who are risking their lives to escape dangerous and oppressive regimes hoping to gain entry into a safer country. People are lined up on many sides of international borders and on many sides of the issue. How many politicians or others have asked what the research shows? Are these would-be immigrants any more likely to be rapists or terrorists than other groups of people? Is large-scale immigration a boon to an economy or a drain? How many people from similar countries and situations assimilated well? What are the costs and what are the benefits of building a multicultural society?

What is the evidence that bears on this ill-defined and multisided issue and how can data suggest possible solutions? The hate-filled terror attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand killing 50 people in March 2019 (CNN, 2019) reminds us of the challenges all nations face as they become more multicultural, and of the need to understand the intersectionality of cultural diversity. Kashima and Safdar (Chapter 30) highlight the complexity of Muslim identity and the experience of Muslim women living in non-Muslim countries. They show that immigrant women's experiences are highly heterogeneous, and call for an in-depth examination of intersectionality of identities from an intercultural perspective.

OUTLINE OF THIS BOOK AND HIGHLIGHTS

We divided the book into six themes plus a short final chapter on take-away messages. There are several suggested readings for each chapter to help you get more acquainted with the topic. A photo and a short biography of each author are included at the end of each chapter.

The sections are loosely organized around six themes.

Section 1 The Underpinnings of Sex and Gender and How to Study Them

We use the first section to introduce readers to the topic and to address basic principles in the psychology of women such as a review in Chapter 2 of prominent theories and ideas to consider when reading about and conducting research. Chapter 3 addresses the topic of evolution

and provides a framework for thinking about the perennial tug of war between nature and nurture – a tug of war where there are no winners or losers. In Chapter 4, the authors discuss issues in sex and gender and sexuality. Recall from our earlier section that Chapter 5 is split into two different chapters because the authors have very different conclusions about sex, gender, and the human brain. We invite readers to use their critical thinking skills and to consider the strength of each author's arguments. You can think of it as a living snapshot of one of psychology's most hotly contested topics.

- Chapter 1 International and Intersectional Perspectives on the Psychology of Women
- Chapter 2 Feminist Theory and Methodologies: Crossing Disciplinary Boundaries
- Chapter 3 The Contents and Discontents of the Nature–Nurture Debate
- Chapter 4 Sex, Gender, and Sexuality
- Chapter 5a Sex Differences on the Brain: A Networking Perspective
- Chapter 5b Sex/Gender Differences in the Brain and their Relationship to Behavior

Section 2 Developmental Perspectives of the International Psychology of Women

Section 2 is the easiest to describe because the chapters are arranged chronologically to follow the stages in human development. Chapter 6 begins in utero and follows sex/gender development through the earliest years of life. Adolescence is a stage when sex differences tend to emerge and when the heavy hand of culture shapes future lives (Chapter 7). Fertility and childbirth (Chapter 8) are areas that are distinctly female (although we do not intend to diminish men's vital contributions). Menopause (Chapter 9) is also a distinctly female experience, but, as explained above, even this biological event has a strong psychosocial component.

- Chapter 6 Sex Differences in Early Life: A Cross-Cultural Perspective
- Chapter 7 Gender and Adolescent Development across Cultures
- Chapter 8 Fertility, Childbirth, and Parenting: Defining Sexual and Gender Relations
- Chapter 9 Three Ways that Aging Affects Women Differently from Men: Menopause, Changes in Physical Appearance, and Caregiving

Section 3 Cognitive and Social Factors

Cognition and social psychology are two main topics in psychology which constitute as major courses offered in a psychology curriculum; so it is not surprising that they are also important when studying the psychology of women. The question of whether women or men are more