



Teaching Feminist Psychology

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Aims of the presentation

- To provide the main areas and topics that should be included in Gender Studies and Psychology
- To present teaching practices that are used in the Feminist Psychology classroom



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The Sine qua Non of Gender Studies and Psychology courses

- ***Gender studies: main concepts and history:***
An introduction to Women's and Gender Studies as an interdisciplinary academic field that explores critical questions about the meaning of gender in society.
- The primary goal of this unit is:
 - to familiarize students with feminist theory and key issues, questions and debates in Women's and Gender Studies scholarship
 - to critically discuss themes of gendered performance and power in a range of social spheres, such as law, culture, education, work, medicine, social policy and the family

The Sine qua Non of Gender Studies and Psychology courses

- ***Gender Studies and psychology:***
 - Connecting gender studies to the psychology of gender, by offering a critical evaluation of the existing research on sex differences and ways in which gender is constructed within society.
 - Examining the interaction of gender, sexuality, class, race/ethnicity and nationality

The Sine qua Non of Gender Studies and Psychology courses

- ***Terms and concepts:***
 - Clarification of terms: sex and gender, the social construction of gender, gender relations, gender stereotypes, gender differences, gender identities, gendered divisions, sexism, feminist psychology, gender and psychology, psychology of women.
 - Clarifying the idea that feminist psychology includes both men and women in a process of changing human relations



The Sine qua Non of Gender Studies and Psychology courses

- ***Gender differences and the development of gender identities:***
 - Providing the main theories and the grant-narratives of psychology that try to explain and interpret gender differences
 - Compare and discuss these classical theories in relation to alternative theoretical perspectives on gender identities:
 - the relational-culture model of J.B.Miller,
 - the “reproduction of mothering” theory of N. Chodorow,
 - Gilligan’s theory on moral development and gender,



The Sine qua Non of Gender Studies and Psychology courses

- ***The feminist criticism in Psychology:***
Approaches and traditions of feminist critique to psychology as a scientific area and in the specific fields : Developmental Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Counselling Psychology, Social Psychology



The Sine qua Non of Gender Studies and Psychology courses

Feminist approaches in psychological research:

- The feminist critique of science and research traditions.
- Dimensions and differences among feminist perspectives on science.
- Feminist epistemology and feminist research.
- The methodology debate: quantitative versus qualitative research methods.
- Sandra Harding and the feminist stand point

The Sine qua Non of Gender Studies and Psychology courses

Feminist approaches in psychotherapy:

Defining feminist therapy as the practice of therapy

- informed by feminist political philosophies and analysis,
- grounded in multicultural feminist scholarship on the psychology of women, men and gender

Essential factors of feminist therapy:

- Awareness and acknowledgment of the social context and of the notion that the personal is the political;
- focus on the importance of egalitarian relationships;
- empowerment as a central issue in therapy

The Sine qua Non of Gender Studies and Psychology courses

Feminist approaches in counselling:

- Introducing the notions of diversity and social justice in the counselling process.
- Explaining the differences between counselling under the gender perspective and counselling women.
- Focus on special themes of feminist counselling:
 - Gender and career counselling
 - Gender and intercultural counselling/ issues of intersectionality in counselling;
 - Counselling girls and young women on specific socio-psychological issues (drugs addiction, eating disorders, sexuality)
 - Gender and violence



The Sine qua Non of Gender Studies and Psychology courses

Ethical issues in feminist psychotherapy and counselling:

- Focus on and explain the ethical guidelines that are additive to, rather than a replacement for, the ethical principles of the profession in which a feminist therapist practices.
- Discuss the following issues:
 - cultural diversities and oppressions;
 - power differentials;
 - overlapping relationships;
 - therapist accountability; social change

Feminist teaching practices

Feminist learning and teaching has to address

- not just obvious examples of women's oppression and self-derogation,
- but also subtler, unconscious expressions of dominant gender relations,
- and the social relations of 'race,' sexuality and class, which are articulated with gender.

Feminist psychology teaching should criticize

- not just psychological objects, methods and theories,
- but also the institutional and wider social and political situation of psychology.

Feminist teaching practices

Students and teachers react in a variety of ways to the role gender plays in traditional psychology:

- they deny or ignore it.
- they concentrate on analysing the dominance of discourses of masculinity, and working out how this might be changed.
- they reject the mainstream discipline completely, and start trying to construct an alternative, woman-centred psychology.
- occasionally, they proceed from a recognition of the gendering of psychology, through a discovery of how other social differences, like those of class, sexuality and 'race', affect psychology



Alternative methods of teaching feminist psychology

- Use of non-psychological as well as psychological material, including poetry, literature, the popular and the mass media
- Getting students to write journals and do social problem-solving exercises as well as orthodox psychological literature reviews and critiques.
- In this way, feminist psychology becomes literary and sociological, as well as psychological.



Alternative methods of teaching feminist psychology

Additionally

- Encourage students
- to investigate data for themselves and use their own experiences, trying to work collaboratively



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Alternative methods of teaching feminist psychology: Photovoice

What is Photovoice?

- It is emerging form of participatory action research grounded in feminist theory,
- It promotes education for critical consciousness and documentary photography
- It engages underrepresented groups in the construction of knowledge through the creative medium of photography.
- As a method, it has been used to study diverse topics: community health needs, body image among adolescents and experiences of domestic violence, or of oppression among Black gay men and lesbians in South Africa.



Alternative methods of teaching feminist psychology: Photovoice

Process:

- Film cameras are provided to participants to document and record their everyday lived experiences in response to a central question.
- Photographic images become the primary mode of expression for participants and go on to serve as the principal data for the study.
- In Photovoice, the participant literally transforms from a passive research subject to an active creator of meaning and knowledge



Photovoice

The process is unfolding in a series of five steps

- **Step one:** students assume ownership of the project and name the topic of exploration.
- **Step two:** students generate the photos in response to the identified topic and write a brief narrative explanation to accompany each photo.
- **Step three:** students identify themes, patterns, or experiences in their own photos and summarize between 5 and 7 patterns
- **Step four:** this same process would be repeated but now each student would review the 5–7 patterns of each of the other students in class, again looking for common themes, patterns, or experiences.
- **Step five:** students come all together to discuss their “findings” and negotiate a common understanding in response to the guiding question.