Notes from SAW Chair

Laurel Watson, Ph.D.

Happy Spring, SAW Members!

I hope the season has greeted you well, and that you aren’t too plagued with those pesky allergens floating around. We have an exciting newsletter issue. We are within the first 100 days of a new presidency, and several of our SAW members have shared their experiences with participating in the women’s marches that occurred across the country. I hope that you are all finding ways to remain engaged while taking care of yourselves in the meantime.

I have several exciting updates to share with you regarding SAW events at APA’s annual convention in Washington, D.C. SAW will be co-facilitating two roundtable presentations, one of which will be a discussion on integrating a feminist research lens when conducting research with LGBTQ populations. We have an impressive array of scholars who will be present to discuss their work and provide helpful suggestions. In addition, we will have a second roundtable discussion on ways to maintain a social justice agenda during a Trump presidency. Again, we have several inspirational and knowledgeable presenters who will help facilitate these dialogues.

Scheduling is still in process, although I look forward to sharing more specifics in our summer newsletter. Lastly, several Counseling Psychologists (including several SAW members) will be participating in a symposium entitled, “Women’s Sexual Agency and
Reproductive Justice: Advances in Research and Education.” Broadly, the presentations will focus on how cultural norms, which may be interpreted through an intersectional lens, affect diverse women’s sexual agency, empowerment, consciousness of rape myths, and knowledge of and attitudes towards abortion. I know it will be an exceptional and timely discussion.

In addition, we are in the process of reviewing student poster submissions for the APA Division 17 social hour in Washington, D.C. Allow me to extend my sincerest thanks to Jillian Wasson, who has graciously taken on this role. I would also like to recognize and thank Morgan Grotewiel, Katherine Jorgenson, Jacquelyn Anderson, and Heather Bloomcamp for taking the time out of their schedules to assist in the reviews. These service endeavors greatly assist in supporting and recognizing the wonderful work that is conducted by students in our community.

I would also like to recognize our recent esteemed award winners:

**Student of the Year: Natalie Raymond**
**Woman of the Year: Lillian Comas-Díaz**
**Foremother: Pam Remer**

Please join me in extending a hearty congratulations for these well-deserving award recipients.

Lastly, please recall that elections for two positions within SAW are currently underway. To cast your vote, please select the following link:

https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=177136

Feel free to check out and “like” our SAW facebook page:

https://www.facebook.com/SawDiv17APA

-Laurel B. Watson, Chair

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**If Flowers Could Sing**

*Noelany Pelc, Ph.D.*

In conversation with a colleague several years ago, I was explained a metaphor for the process of summarizing and reflecting as therapists—a process of collecting vulnerable flower stems that are offered to us over the course of a session and gifting them back to our clients in a bouquet. At the close of each session, we provide an opportunity that is often denied by society. These experiences are opportunities to gather, honor and empower clients to embrace the petals they scattered during their life journeys; assembling and carefully arranging the trampled, long-forgotten and fresh memories, alike. Our rapt attention is a verbal reminder that their presence is witnessed and heard.

Following a divisive, bitter, and highly controversial election year, I am drawn in and impacted as I hear women around me demanding an acknowledgement of their existence, advocating for their needs, and reaching out for hope of a future that represents them. I hear the women who are drowning in fear, for themselves and their loved ones. I hear the women who are re-energized in their quest for equality, justice, and freedom. And I observe the movement to silence and deny our lived experience and the impact of political decisions made without our consent. I, among many others, have been following the trail of petals that women have torn, dropped, released and divulged as they journey and make meaning of their experiences. I, too, have spent nights awake wondering how to forge progress and join my sisters in solidarity. I, too, have wondered what I can offer and lend to our
cause, and am reminded of the bouquet we gather for our clients, honoring their pain and their resilience.

In response, if I could offer anything, it would be a bouquet. A collection of snapshots more ephemeral than flowers and more enduring than an album. I offer the parallel of wrapping a bouquet to the physical manifestation of a collection of occurrences of women, as simultaneously complex, delicate, and ephemeral as florets, often blooming and wilting unwitnessed in the fast-moving political ecosystem. The life course of each petal and singular or compounded point of reference is representative of an endless cosmos of meaning- an entire lifespan, encapsulated in silence and set adrift...

A ribbon lies between us, unfurled; bridging the space we have created, welcoming and preparing to embrace each metaphorical floret, and honoring each as a gift to be wrapped. The first stem spins wildly to the floor- a delicate anemone blown in the wind by anticipation and uncertainty. The sociopolitical currents whipping the air around us into a frenzy, carrying sprigs of cypress and symbolizing despair- a heavy force crushing the fragile structure of anticipation. Time elapses before a lavender stem is solemnly placed on the blanket of despair- silence has crept in. Words elude us. Words perjure us. The royal purple of the atropa belladona belies its danger as a deadly nightshade. In mere moments, however, a clasped hand thrusts its companion onto the pile, unable to deter the inevitable bittersweet nightshade and slamming the silence with its truth--we...are...still...here. An unspoken truth remains a truth. Droplets of water disperse, staining the ribbon in tears shed in private.

Time begins to slow, and for an interminable moment, our eyes meet- but we are not alone. Gentle hands come forth carrying a message of resistance, a wild tansy to serve as a beacon. Whispers become hums, and hums become vibrations, and vibrations become songs, carrying voices we had forgotten were present. Lengthy shoots of statice are raised, swimming in the crowd and overtaking the space between us. The group raises an ode of remembrance to the women who paved the road before us- a reminder of the history and revolutions that bolster our cause. A rhythm moves into the room, compelling us to capture the movement, swaying and clutching armfuls of French willow for bravery and humanity, conducting waves of baskets brimming with live oak for liberty, and a powerful surge carrying edelweiss reaches the heart of the multitude where the arrangement began- a promise of change and transformation. In the final moments, a shower of forget-me-nots flutters to the center, sealing a faithful pact in the face of adversity. Then we work...

In unison, we labor over the collective undertaking to swathe each petal, herb, sprig, and stem-insisting on the representative value of each symbolic element, and being equally mindful of the task that unifies us.

If I could offer anything, I would offer a reminder that our experiences are not unseen. Women are listening to each other’s stories, gifting vulnerability, hope, passion, and sustenance to continue vying for justice. You are heard. You are seen. You do matter. Your voice carries. This bouquet belongs to you, to me, and to all of us.

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Using My Voice in the Midst of Grief

Pauline Y. Venieris, M.A., M.M.F.T.

January gripped with me grief for a number of reasons. A new presidency meant grieving what could have been and trying to understand what was. There was a lot of confusion, anger, and fear. My work with a couple clients in particular had been centered on grief work and their pain stirred up a grief inside of me that had been buried for some time. My mother
died almost eight years ago and while I miss her often and deeply, I was crying fresh tears in a new way. A student on campus committed suicide and I was at the residential hall talking to the shocked roommate who found her and consoling a hysterical friend who had just received the news. As I held the rocking, wailing friend, I remembered what it was like to lose oneself in the pangs of loss. At home that night, I lit some candles on my altar, practiced yoga, and ended with a loving-kindness meditation. My heart hurt.

The following weekend, one of my best friends lost her father to a debilitating disease that had taken away his mobility and speech for years. I had just seen him a few weeks ago at my friend’s child’s first year birthday. While he was sitting in a wheelchair and couldn’t speak, his eyes and smile always communicated his enthusiasm and love for life and for his family. Having known the family for over 15 years, I visited them at home. The house was full. Everyone spoke in whispers. There was lots of food but not much eating. People were huddled in groups making plans – from the funeral to the memorial to the charity to which people would donate rather than give flowers. My friends and I pored over a box of old photos, picking out special ones for the slide show. Right around this time, the executive order “protecting the nation from foreign terrorist entry into the United States” also meant that members of my friends’ family in Iran could not attend any of the services for her father. The personal was definitely political. I came back to work on a Monday morning feeling heavy. Loss upon loss upon loss.

Given that I work at a politically active campus, students had organized a protest against the immigration ban. I had a full day but inhaled my salad in the first few minutes of lunch and walked over to the protest. Several of my colleagues were also there. A few people spoke and once a crowd had gathered, we marched through the streets with posters and call-and-response chants. As we walked on, I grew bolder and louder. The sun was beaming down on us and I removed my jacket as I felt the heat growing, literally and figuratively. Loss can make us feel small and powerlessness but I had a voice. I had a community. Looking around, the crowd was a beautiful mix of genders, races, and ages. As an Iranian-Armenian woman, I felt personally supported. People cared as much as I did, and I felt enveloped in a sense of hope.

Yelling in the street for half an hour does not cure all. I recognized that and was intentional about engaging in lots of self-care, spiritual and reflective practice, and connecting with nature and loved ones. However, on that Monday it did leave me feeling energized and balanced. As I walked back to my office, I felt the vibration of my own chanting throughout my body. I felt alive. I felt connected to my colleagues, the students, and the local community. I felt lighter.

Grief is when something is taken away. Our voices. Our bodies. These are incredible tools for healing and for moving through the emotions involved with grief. To remember that we are still whole - even when we are hurting, even when we are oppressed - is a gift to ourselves and one that we truly deserve.

Reflections on the Women’s March

Ayli Carrero Pinedo, Lauren Chapple, Marisa Mango, and Natalie Raymond are four students in the University of North Dakota’s Counseling Psychology program. In January 2017, they travelled to Washington, D.C. to attend the Women’s March.

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Not many people can say they started their 25th birthday participating in the largest demonstration in U.S. history.
Every step in the march was a symbol of the things I accomplished and the work that needs to be done for the communities I represent. Even though my legal status has stopped me from participating in protests in the past, I wanted to use my new privilege as a U.S. citizen to stand for equality and insist on the intersectionality of issues.

Marching reminded me that in the moments I feel powerless, I can still fight for sexual and gender minorities and continue to be an advocate for racial/ethnic diversity, religious beliefs, and disabilities, among other identities. It finally felt like my foreign accent had a place in America.

Although I did not have a choice about coming to the United States, I have a choice on how to move forward. So fellow sisters, but particularly mujeres and immigrants of color, I want to remind you that our dreams have no schedule, we are resilient, and we will always be STRONGER TOGETHER.

-Ayli

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Growing up I was told that I would have to work harder than other students to be offered the same opportunities. As much as I didn't want to believe this, that has been true of much of my experience as a Black woman fighting her way through the trials of academia. When I look around, I simply don't see other folks who look like me. I have earned my spot in a doctoral program, but still feel alone. At times like this I remember all of the shoulders that held me up. While I earned all of my placements in my career, I recognize that I would not have been able to achieve as highly as I have without the support, encouragement, and strength bestowed upon me by my family. My parents, grandparents, and others sacrificed, fought, and pulled for me. They taught me how to take agency in my own life and not depend upon a hope that if I just stay quiet things will change.

Participating in the Women's March in Washington was an extension of the lessons I have learned from those who came before me. I love this country, but know it can do better. I have been raised around strong women who wield their voices and own their space with such fervor that others take note. I refuse to let the lessons of my ancestors go to waste. I have a voice, and I use it. I want to use my privilege to give voice to others. I have to. The March was but one opportunity to speak toward Women's rights and the intersectionalities that women of Color face daily. I am my ancestors’ wildest dreams.

-Lauren

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Growing up in a conservative family with a patriarchal hierarchy, I was not given the opportunity to truly express my political views. Many political conversations started and ended with a head nod. Offending or expressing my views to my elders was a cultural misstep in my Italian and Syrian family. In these moments, I suppressed my feelings and viewpoints in order to uphold my cultural values.

Deciding to March in Washington D.C. on January 21st left me with conflicting feelings between standing up for the rights of women and minorities and the possible backlash from my family. However, standing up for women’s and minorities’ equal rights in this country was of the utmost importance. I wanted my family and anyone else who knew me to understand my stance on politics, women’s rights, and who I am as a person. To express my life experience of being silenced, I used a Mexican proverb for my poster, “They tried to bury us, but they did not know we were seeds.”

Marching that day was an empowering moment for me to fight for what I value and
believe with others. Many people marched that
day with solidarity, anger, fiery passion, and
hope. I look back upon that day often and feel
that same fiery passion, anger, and hope, which
inspires me to continue my journey of
advocacy.

-Marisa

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I had a roommate in college who once
remarked that she was a Republican because
“Republicans don’t waste all their time
protesting everything like Democrats do.”

Many years later, I know that (a) Republicans
definitely protest, and (b) if they don’t, it’s
likely because of their collective privilege, and
not, as the speaker was implying, their
collective dignity and restraint. But at the time,
this argument silenced me.

I didn’t think about her words while I was
marching on D.C. on January 21st, because I
was busy smashing the patriarchy (as one does
on Saturdays). But I have thought about them
since, as I’ve contemplated what the march
meant and what comes next. Those questions
are not, however, quite the same as wondering
if it was a waste of time.

Factually, I could point to the opposition and
rollback the Trump administration has faced
since taking office, consistently driven by
popular protest and outrage. Yet even more
powerful is my memory of how I felt while I
was there, shoulder-to-shoulder with rabble-
rousing allies, surrounded by loud music and
colorful signs, swept along in the single largest
river of people I have ever seen. In that
moment, I felt the two emotions that largely
make up my personality – hope and anger –
and I felt them more deeply than ever before.
And every time since then that I have needed a
dose of one or the other to keep going, I return
to that memory.

It’s a moment that won’t soon outlive its
utility; far from a waste, I can’t imagine a
better use of my time.

-Natalie

(W)Righting the Conflict
Richa Khanna

I am experiencing a sense of conflict as I
attempt to pen down my thoughts in a clear and
coherent manner. Maybe this conflict is
reflective of the current times; maybe most
Indian women are feeling the way I am as they
sit and think about what it means to be a
feminist. What does it really mean to be an
Indian feminist woman? I think it becomes
important to describe identities in terms of
layers rather than simply defining a feminist in
absolute terms. Maybe I should identify as a
budding feminist. The last 5 years have taught
me a lot about my privileged and oppressed
identities, so much that I recognize both easily
– this recognition is a privilege and power in its
own right. I have not only received
multicultural education, but I have also
experienced the implications of what it means
to truly know how systemic forces operate in
society. I am then reminded of the
responsibility that comes with my privilege. I
can’t help but ask the questions: What
responsibility do I have in light of the
knowledge and insight I have gained? How
does this sense of responsibility manifest in
socio-politically challenging times? How can
this responsibility and power stand
oppositional forces? It’s almost as if my sense
of will is constantly being challenged,
manipulated, and put to the test by external
forces. How can I and other Indian women
seek relief from these questions, this confusion
and never ending conflict? It is an intimidating
challenge to say the least. Not only do I find
myself undergoing the process of acculturation
and its associated stressors, but I also hold the
responsibility of being one of a few Indian
woman-identified Counseling Psychologists in training, committed to social change. Being a woman who was born and raised in India and who received education entirely in the English medium, I have been exposed to several aspects of both Indian and American culture. For example, on the one hand, I have grown up listening to Hindi Bollywood songs and engrossing myself in traditional Indian romance movies; on the other hand, I have enjoyed movies such as Home Alone, animations like The Lion King; and danced to the tunes of Michael Jackson, George Michael, and New Kids on the Block. Imagine my confused brain as I try to not only make sense of cultural messages but also resolve my sense of identity as an Indian citizen, a woman, an international student in the U.S, and a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology!

Before you find yourself feeling sucked into my doomsday story, hold on! This story does have a positive narrative as well. I have to come to realize a few things as I sit in the discomfort caused by my self-imposed inquiries. Well, it’s more of a running into realities that instill a sense of hope; I feel a sense of validation in hearing other women’s stories that remind me of my own—a feeling that this conflict is normal and has a purpose, that it needs to be nurtured like a developing child that will one day blossom into a grown feminist-language speaking adult; that several women have felt this way and have not engaged in self-criticism, but instead embraced this feeling and have still been committed in their own way to bringing about change. That’s the key! Each one’s commitment looks different, and if at any point I find myself enjoying a song with lyrics that I used to like but might now make me cringe after recognizing my emerging feminist identity, I just watch “Confessions of a Bad Feminist,” the TED Talk by Roxane Gay. Another favorite TED Talk “go to” is “3 Lessons on Success by an Arab Businesswoman,” by Leila Hoteit. And then, I notice the positive feminist role models in Indian culture—businesswomen, leaders, politicians, actresses, and common women. Indian news headings such as “Meet Mumbai’s First Women Rickshaw Drivers” and online platforms such as feminisminindia.com bring a smile to my face and touch my heart.

I don’t have to go too far to regain a sense of faith in myself. Where there are challenges, there is also progress. I tell myself: “Things are changing. It’s slow, but it’s as much a reality as the current sociopolitical climate.” My feminist process has its own pace. And that’s okay.

Counseling Psychologists: Let’s Get Cliterate!

Laurie Mintz, Ph.D.

During graduate school (now over 30 years ago!) and the early stages of my career, the Section on Woman (now the Section for the Advancement of Women, SAW) was instrumental to me identifying as a feminist Counseling Psychologist. It is thus a great honor to share my forthcoming book—which embodies the principles of feminist counseling psychology—with SAW members.

Becoming Cliterate: Why Orgasm Equality Matters—and How to Get It (HarperCollins, 2017) is a combination of feminist analysis and self-help aimed at closing what researchers term the “orgasm gap,” which is the consistent finding that young adult cisgender men are having significantly more orgasms than are young adult cisgender women. Becoming Cliterate is written for a lay audience in an accessible and entertaining format, with a review in the Sunday April 23 New York Times Book Review saying that the title “wins this year’s award for best book title, pun division.” Several readers have also told me that they laughed out loud at the many puns and word plays within the book (e.g. it being divided into “Sextions,” the term

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“hypocritical”). Despite its humor, Becoming Cliterate is heavily steeped in feminist analysis and psychological science. At its core is the feminist principle that the personal is political. Indeed, perhaps nowhere is the political more personal than in our bedrooms—and the ultimate goal of Becoming Cliterate is to bring equality to our most intimate encounters. Quoting Dr. Peter Slavin, “There can be no quality without equality” and this applies to all arenas of inequality, including orgasm inequality.

Orgasm inequality is rampant among young adults. As one striking example, in research I conducted with college students and present in the book, 51% of cisgender men vs. 4% of cisgender women said they usually orgasm during first-time hookup sex! Although research shows that this disparity successively closes in additional hookups with the same person, friends-with-benefits relationships, and committed relationships, the gap never completely closes in any context (Armstrong, England, & Foggarty, 2012). Related, up to one-half of young adult cisgender women who have sex with cisgender men say they are concerned with their lack of orgasms. Cisgender women who have sex with one another do not have this issue (Garcia, Llloyd, Wallen, & Fisher, 2014; Frederick, St. John, Garcia, & Llloyd, 2017). Clearly, then, the orgasm gap is a cultural problem. There is not something wrong with cisgender women struggling to orgasm as they often so painfully assume; instead, something is wrong with our culture! Thus, to close the orgasm gap, we need to expose the cultural roots of the problem. We also need to provide the attitudes and skills to turn this knowledge into action. In the tradition of feminist therapy, Becoming Cliterate provides both.

The first Sextion (“Your Orgasm Problem is a Cultural Problem”) exposes the cultural problems contributing to the orgasm gap (e.g., false images of women reaching orgasm by intercourse alone; slut shaming; and the results of objectification of women). This section also includes a feminist analysis of the language we use to talk about sex (e.g., sex = intercourse; calling everything “down there” a vagina and thereby rendering the clitoris to nameless invisibility). This Sextion also includes a chapter that puts female orgasm (or lack thereof) in a historical and current-day context. In short, by the time readers finish this Sextion, they will be keenly aware of the cultural roots of their orgasm problem.

The next Sextion (“Let’s Look Under the Hood”) includes detailed information on female genital anatomy and sexual response. Importantly, this chapter encourages readers to examine themselves, and includes information to help decrease all-too-common genital shame. By the time readers finish this Sextion, they will have a deeper understanding and appreciation of their bodies.

The third Sextion (“The Time Has Come For You to Cum”) includes psychological interventions. The first chapter in this Sextion includes sex-positive mantras to help readers overcome internalized slut shaming and negative body image, as well as instruction for mindfulness—since research shows that immersing in the present-experience is necessary for orgasm. The second chapter guides readers to “take matters into their own hands” and learn what they need to orgasm, since masturbation is a cornerstone of sex therapy treatment. The third chapter presents our current cultural script for sex (i.e., foreplay, intercourse, sex over), underscoring how this script values the male orgasm, and then presents four new sexual scripts named after the female orgasm (“You Come First,” “You Come Second,” “Only You Come” and “You Come Together”). The scripts are inclusive of heterosexual and lesbian sex and the chapter includes quotes of real people using these scripts—quite honestly, turning the book into a combination not only of feminist analysis and self-help, but also a bit of erotica! Finally, the fourth chapter in this Sextion

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includes general and sexual communication skills training to help readers tell partners what they need to orgasm. By the time that readers finish reading this Sextion, they will have the individual skills needed for empowered sexuality.

But that’s not all—the fourth Sextion (Wait There’s More—Cum Again) gives some additional tips for an empowered sex life and for life-long sexual learning. True to feminist psychology, this Sextion also includes a “call to action” to help spread the word about orgasm equality to others. Finally, there is fifth Sextion (“You Don’t Have to Have a Clitoris to be Cliterate”) that summarizes all of the book’s information for heterosexual cisgender men—because orgasm equality benefits everyone.

Because, in the tradition of counseling psychology, I identify as a scientist-practitioner, a student and I are conducting a randomized clinical trial to examine if cisgender women who read the book improve orgasm rate, sexual assertiveness, genital pride, and feelings of entitlement to orgasm from a partner. My prediction is that they will. I say this because the book includes the components of the feminist therapy I use with clients struggling with orgasm problems, as well as the knowledge I provide students in my Psychology of Human Sexuality class. My students and my clients commonly become empowered to orgasm—often for the first time.

It is my sincere hope that Becoming Cliterate will likewise assist you in helping others to embrace their sexual pleasure.

Counseling psychology has been at the forefront of addressing many systemic inequities, and I believe we are ideally suited to address orgasm inequality. So my valued SAW colleagues, come on (pun intended), let’s help get counseling psychology—and society at large—cliterate!

References

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Announcements: Professional Achievements

- Dena Abbott has accepted a faculty position (Assistant Professor of Counseling Psychology) at Louisiana Tech University beginning in Fall 2017.

- Morgan Grotewiel has accepted a faculty position (Assistant Professor of Psychology) at Webster University beginning in Fall 2017.

- Ruth Fassinger was presented the Elder Award at the National Multicultural Summit (NMCS) by Division 44.

- Linda Forrest was presented the Elder Award at the National Multicultural Summit (NMCS) by Division 17.

Recent Publications

- Laurie Mintz has a forthcoming book: Becoming Cliterate: Why Orgasm Equality Matters—and How To Get It (HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins). Becoming Cliterate received praise in the Sunday April 23 New York Times Book Review, and has been bought by publishers in Australia/New Zealand, Germany, and the UK, with these international release dates scattered throughout Summer 2017. You can read more about the book, including advance praise, at http://becomingcliterate.com. You can pre-order the book to arrive on its release date of May 9, 2017 by going to the same link or any online bookseller.


Corrections

- In the Fall 2016 edition of WomanView, I did not list Raquel Craney as a student representative in the SAW Governing Board, Ex-Officio, & Committees section. Raquel and her contact information are included in this edition.

- In the Fall 2016 edition of WomanView, I incorrectly stated that Ruth Fassinger was nominated for the NMCS Elder Award by Division 17. Dr. Fassinger received the award from Division 44, and Linda Forrest received the award from Division 17.
https://www.facebook.com/SawDiv17APA

Visit the SAW Facebook page for a great way to meet many like-minded individuals seeking to address issues related to gender, sexuality, diversity, and social justice. This page will keep you up to date on the most current SAW information. It also provides non-members with a quick and easy way to join SAW. Like us on Facebook!

http://www.div17.org/sections/advancement-of-women/

Visit the SAW website to learn more about SAW, including our leadership, task forces, awards, bylaws, and projects. You can also join our listserv and download the membership application.

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Section for the Advancement of Women (SAW) Membership Application

To become a member of the Section for the Advancement of Women, complete the form below and mail it to the Membership Chair, Nadia T. Hasan, Ph.D. at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Department of Psychology and Sociology, MSC 177, 700 University Boulevard, Kingsville, Texas 78363.

Membership dues should be submitted in January of each year in order to remain active within the Section. Annual Dues for psychologist members are $15 and $5 for graduate and undergraduate students. Please make checks or money orders payable to Division 17 Section for the Advancement of Women.

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Note: The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the policies of the American Psychological Association, the Society of Counseling Psychology, or its Sections.