

APA RESOLUTION on Supporting Psychologists' Education and Research about, and Advocacy against Violations of Girls' and Women's Human Rights Globally

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This resolution focuses on the human rights violations that are systemically perpetrated against girls and women, consistent with the 2023 United Nation's (UN) report *Progress on the sustainable development goals* and with Amnesty International's (2024) *Women's rights*. Within this resolution, the language of girls and women is inclusive of transgender and gender-diverse children and adults who are impacted by systemic sexism via socialization or lived experience as girls or women. Globally, human rights violations against girls and women affect the largest number of people, that is, 50% of the population. In 2024 the UN declared that girls' and women's inequality "remains the greatest human rights challenge" of our times and urged all to invest in women and accelerate progress (UN, 2024).

WHEREAS girls and women around the world experience violations of their human rights, across private (e.g., family) and public (e.g., work) domains, and across intersectionalities, for example, of socioeconomic status, caste, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, ethnicity, culture, nationality, personal, religious, and political beliefs, and health/ability status, because of systemic sexism intersecting with, for example, systemic racism, ageism, ableism, cisgenderism, and heterosexism. Nowhere in the world do girls and women have de facto and/or de jure, equal rights to boys and men. At the same time, the forms and severity of these human-rights violations vary by community and country, and depending on girls' and women's other statuses, for example, by caste, age, and ethnicity (Amnesty International, 2024; Bunch & Frost, 2000; Canetto, 2018; Carter, 2014; Homan, 2019; Kleinman et al., 2006; UN, 1979, 2014, 2015, 2016; 2023, 2024; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002).

WHEREAS the violations of the rights of girls and women are often justified based on selective cultural and religious traditions and on "laws [mostly] made by men, interpreted by men, administered by men, in favor of men, and against women" as Anthony (1873) asserted. The violations are sustained by power, resources and opportunity gaps at the disadvantage of women—gaps that these misogynist traditions and laws created and sustain (Amnesty International, 2024; Association for Women's Rights in Development, n.d.; Bunch & Frost, 2000; Canetto, 2018; Canetto & Burn, 2021; Carter, 2014; Trott & Canetto, 2014; Winter, 2006).

WHEREAS millions of girls and women are missing from the world population, having been denied the right to be born and/or to stay alive (Amnesty International, 2024; Cai et al., 2021; Klasen & Wink, 2003; Turquet et al., 2013; UN, 2015; UN Women, 2023; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002)—via practices ranging from female-selective abortion (Abrejo et al., 2009; Jiang et al., 2012; Nie, 2011; Watts & Zimmerman 2002); to girls being killed soon after birth, or dying of deliberate neglect during infancy and childhood, having being denied adequate food, water, shelter or health care (Bongaarts & Guilimoto, 2015; Jayachandran & Kuziemko, 2011; Khera et al., 2014; Watts & Zimmerman 2002); to girls and women dying in sexual exploitation and trafficking practices (García-Moreno et al., 2015; Warner, 2010; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002); to girls and women being killed by their in-laws so their husband can marry again and acquire another dowry (Babu & Babu, 2011; Rastogi & Therly, 2006); to girls and women being murdered, often with impunity, by a male relative, for having engaged in (or being suspected of engaging in) patriarchy-defined "moral" transgressions (e.g., wearing make-up; speaking with a male who is not a close relative; having sexual relationships outside of marriage; having a same-sex relationship [Human Rights Watch, 2011, May 2]); refusing an arranged marriage; leaving an abusive husband; or having been raped) (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015; Trott & Canetto, 2014; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002); to girls and women being murdered via targeted police violence (Judson, Orakwue, & Alang, 2024); to women being pressured into suicide or killed by male relatives for not producing children, or for having only devalued female children (Canetto, 2015; Canetto & Rezaeian, 2020; UN, 2014); to women dying during pregnancy and/or childbirth because of cultural and/or economic barriers to reproductive care (Shen & Williamson, 1999; UN, 2014, 2023); to widows being killed by male in-laws so the marital property can stay with the male family line (Batha, 2015; Pemunta & Alubafi, 2016; UN, 2014; Warner, 2010).

WHEREAS girls and women are denied their health rights, including the right to adequate nutrition, clean water, shelter, clean, safe and private toilets, inexpensive sanitary pads, and health care (UN, 1995, 2014, 2015); the right to engage in physical exercise and physical education; the right to participate in all sports, including competitively, in public, and with public funding equal to that available to boys and men (UN, 2014); the right to reproductive and maternal health information and care (UN, 2014, 2023); the right to physical integrity and protection from physical harm or

mutilation, including genital cutting and breast ironing (Amnesty International, 2024; Safe world for women, 2013; UN, 1995, 2014, 2015; UNICEF, 2010); the right not to be harassed, stigmatized, held back from school or work, or discriminated against when menstruating, pregnant, or a parent (UN, 2014); the right not to be subjected to distorted, exploitative, or sexualized media images of the female body (Jeffreys, 2015); the right to medicine that has been tested with female participants (Turquet et al., 2013); the right not to be misdiagnosed as mentally ill and the right not to be prescribed psychotropic medication when experiencing physical pain or illnesses, when exhausted from family caregiving work, and/or when traumatized by abuse and violence (Canetto, 2018; UN, 2014); and the right to rest and leisure time (Turquet et al., 2013; Warner, 2010).

WHEREAS girls and women are denied their sexual and reproductive rights, including the right for sexual knowledge; the right to integrity of their genitalia; the right to sexual choice, agency and consent; the right to sexual expression; the right to sexual pleasure; the right to sexual abstinence; the right for their sexuality (e.g., their desire) not to be defined or judged based on pornography or prostitution; the right to control their reproduction without the consent of others; the right to safety in sexual relationships via the use of contraceptive methods that protect from diseases and unwanted pregnancies; the right to accessible, affordable, safe, and private termination of pregnancy and to post-termination care; the right to conceive and the right to carry through a pregnancy with medical and social support, including outside of a heterosexual marriage, while in a same-sex relationship, and when experiencing a disability (Amnesty International, 2024; APA, 2007; Canetto, 2018; Eltahawy, 2015; Human Rights Watch, 2011, November 10); Jeffreys, 2015; MacKinnon, 2007; Moran, 2015; Rajagopalan & Inzamam, 2024; UN, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2015; UNICEF, 2010; UNODC, 2012; Warner, 2010; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002; WHO, 2008).

WHEREAS girls and women are denied their educational, work, and economic rights, including the right to be educated; the right to be educated in a manner that adapts to the needs of girls and women with disabilities; the right to work across a range of trades and professions (e.g., the right to be an electrician, a comedian, or a judge); the right to equal pay for equal work; the right to retain control over earnings and properties; the right to own, administer, and inherit property; the right to retain or be given property upon marriage, divorce, widowhood, or death of a relative; and the right to an equitable share of (and to not have sole or nearly-sole) responsibility for the physical and emotional care of family (Amnesty International, 2024; UN, 2014, 2015, 2023; UN Women, 2015; Warner, 2010; WHO, n.d.).

WHEREAS girls and women are denied their legal rights, including the right not to be married as a juvenile; the right to choose if, when and who to marry; the right not to be sold or have to carry a dowry into marriage; the right to retain their last name and to give their last name to their spouse and children; the right

to marry outside of their religion; the right to initiate a divorce; equal economic rights in marriage, divorce, and widowhood with regard to ownership, acquisition, management, inheritance, administration, use, and disposition of property; the right to remarry after divorce or widowhood; the right to have custody or access to their children post-divorce; the right to confer nationality to their spouse or children regardless of paternal affiliation; the right to record their children on their identity cards; the right to serve in all units of their countries' armed forces, and to be safe from harassment and abuse while in the armed forces; the right to serve as an equal witness to men in a court of law; the right to interpret the law and to represent clients as a lawyer; and the right to be trained and serve as a judge (Amnesty International, 2024; Eltahawy, 2015; Monteith et al., 2021; Ritchie, & Naclerio, 2015; Turquet et al., 2013; UN, 2014, 2023; UN Women, 2013, February 6; Warner, 2010).

WHEREAS girls and women are denied their political rights, including the right to vote and the ability to exercise the right to vote; the right to have a proportional representation of women among electable or elected representatives; the right to seek the full range of political offices; and the right to full participation as government representatives at the international level and in the work of international organizations (Amnesty International, 2024; UN, 2014, 2015, 2023; UN Division for the Advancement of Women, n.d.; Warner, 2010)

WHEREAS girls and women are denied their personal-beliefs and religious rights, including the right to pray anywhere in their religion's holy sites; the right to enter and pray at their religious sites when menstruating; the right to access training to be a religious leader in their communities; the right to interpret religious texts, lead religious services, and serve in religious leadership roles in their communities; the right to retain their religion upon marriage to a spouse with a different religion; the right to confer and teach their religion and other personal beliefs to their children; and the right to be free from religion (Amnesty International, 2024; Arat, 2009; Carter, 2014; Eltahawy, 2015; Warner, 2010).

WHEREAS girls and women are denied rights of self-expression and self-determination, including the right to choose what to wear in private and in public; the right to choose what to wear consistent with desired gender expression and gender identity; the right to go out of the house and to be in public spaces unaccompanied by a male relative; the right to ride a bicycle; the right to drive a vehicle; the right to travel within their country and internationally without the permission of, or without being accompanied by a male family member; the right to enter and stay at a hotel unaccompanied by a man; the right to live alone; the right to choose whether, whom, and when to marry; the right to choose whether and when to have children; the right to sing in public; the right to play an instrument, in private and in public; the right to teach and learn from women and men, across levels of education; the right to be a physician providing care for all individuals; the right to be an actor, an artist, a musician, an ascetic, a priest, or a lama (Amnesty International,

2024; Carter, 2014; Eltahawy, 2015; Manji, 2003; McKinnon, 2007; Warner, 2010)

WHEREAS girls and women are denied the right to safety, by intersectionalities of discrimination, for example, by way of racism, specifically the right to be free from threats of, and actual acts of physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse and violence, in the home, in the workplace, and in public places; and the right to quick and just recourse against abuse and violence, including counting as witnesses in the prosecution and punishment of harassers and abusers (Amnesty International, 2024; Devries et al., 2013; Ertürk, 2006; UN, 1993, 2007, 2011, 2014, 2023; UN Women 2013, 2016a, 2016b; Warner, 2010; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002).

WHEREAS violations of girls' and women's rights typically take place in the private domain (that is, in the family), not only in the public domain (that is, between the individual and the state), and are often dismissed or justified by community or religious authorities as private matters, cultural practices or religious dogma, as a way to keep these violations beyond the reach of human-rights law (Bunch & Frost, 2000; Canetto, 2018; Canetto & Burn, 2021; Carter, 2014; Mirhosseini, 1995; Rajan, 2018; Rao, 1995; Rudolf & Eriksson, 2007; Trott & Canetto, 2014).

WHEREAS many girls and women, having been exposed, all of their lives, to ideas about their inferiority, often come to believe, via internalized-oppression processes (APA, 2018), that girls and women do not deserve equal rights to boys and men, and may participate in violations of their own and other girls' and women's rights, including when sexism intersects with racism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism and other forms of discrimination (Trott & Canetto, 2014; UNIFEM, n.d.).

WHEREAS psychologists have expertise that is relevant to education, research, practice, and policies about girls' and women's human rights.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that APA calls for national and international educational initiatives that expand knowledge about the human rights of girls and women, including those who are socialized or have lived experience as girls or women, in the general population and across a range of stakeholders and professionals, including psychologists.

SPECIFICALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that APA commits to expanding formal education about girls' and women's rights. APA recommends that information about the history and status of girls' and women's rights, nationally and internationally, is integrated in education across levels (high-school to post-graduate levels). One outcome would be that a broad range of individuals would be aware of the long and diverse history of women fighting for their rights, the contradictions in the status of girls' and women's rights within and across countries, and the power of cultural ideologies and institutions in normalizing discrimination against girls and women. Another outcome would be that a diversity of

professional practices (e.g., in education, research and policy) could be informed and guided by the history and status of girls' and women's rights (Canetto & Burn, 2021). APA also recommends that content about violations of girls' and women's rights, nationally and internationally, including psychology's role in perpetrating and normalizing violations of girls' and women's human rights (e.g., Baker & Mason, 2010; Bohan, 1992; Chesler, 1972; Crawford & Marecek, 1980; Formanowicz & Hansen, 2022; Hegarty & Buechel, 2006; Weisstein, 1968, 1993), is incorporated in education across levels (high-school to post-graduate levels). An outcome would be that a wide range of stakeholders and professionals would be knowledgeable about these violations and the harm that they cause, understand their ethical responsibilities regarding girls' and women's human rights, and seek to develop skills to advocate on behalf of girls' and women's rights, nationally and internationally (Canetto, 2018).

SPECIFICALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that APA encourages psychologists who are trained in girls' and women's rights to educate other professionals, policy makers, and the general public about psychology's unique scientific and professional contributions to girls' and women's rights, nationally and internationally (e.g., research findings on the psychological and physical impact on girls and women of violations of their right to safety; research findings on the psychosocial mechanisms sustaining male oppression of, and violence against girls and women; best practices to alleviate the traumas girls and women experience in communities and societies as related to violations of their human rights). The outcome would be that a broad range of individuals have access to psychological science and practices about what contributes to violations of girls' and women's rights, and what can reduce harm from and what can prevent violations of girls' and women's rights, nationally and internationally (Canetto, 2018).

Violations of girls' and women's rights are a boys' and men's issue, not just a girls' and women's issue. Boys and men need to be aware of, and take responsibility for practices and systems of male oppression of, and male violence against girls and women. For change to occur, boys and men need to be educated about, and take initiatives, individually and collectively, to end male discrimination and violence against girls and women, nationally and internationally (Canetto, 2018; Jewkes et al., 2015; Michau et al., 2015; UN Women, n.d.).

THEREFORE, BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that APA promotes national and international research on girls' and women's human rights and the dissemination of the science of the human rights of girls and women, including those who are socialized or have lived experience as girls or women.

SPECIFICALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that APA promotes national and international research on general and specific (e.g., by intersectionalities of status/personal characteristics and in different cultural contexts) factors that enable versus prevent violations of girls' and women's human rights (including what

enables and what prevents girls and women from internalizing a sense of low worth (APA, 2018); and what sustains male oppression of, and violence against girls and women (Canetto, 2018)), building on multidisciplinary and multinational evidence, and in consideration of contexts (Tait et al., 2019; UN, 2014, 2023).

SPECIFICALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that APA promotes national and international research on interventions geared at eliminating and/or preventing violations of girls' and women's human rights (Canetto, 2018), building on multidisciplinary and multinational evidence, and in consideration of contexts (Tait et al., 2019; UN, 2014, 2023).

SPECIFICALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that APA commits to eliminating research practices that implicitly but powerfully marginalize girls' and women's experiences and rights (Formanowicz & Hansen, 2022; Hegarty & Buechel, 2006), including using boys and men as the standard for comparison and making boys/men the norm (men/women ratio instead of women/men ratio or gender ratio; visuospatial displays featuring boys' and men's data first/on the left side; word order with boys coming before girls).

THEREFORE, BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that APA engages in national and international advocacy in support of the human rights of girls and women, including those who are socialized or have lived experience as girls or women.

SPECIFICALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that APA promotes psychologists collaborating with national and international organizations and institutions in the development and implementation of policies and laws promoting and protecting girls' and women's rights, and in consideration of contexts. This includes integrating a girls' and women's human-rights perspective into regional, national, and international psychological associations' codes, policies, strategic goals, and conference themes (Canetto, 2018); and collaborating with national and international organizations to establish laws preventing violations of girls' and women's human rights and enforcing penalties for violations of girls' and women's human rights (CSO-Net ECOSOCO Civil Society Network, n.d.).

THEREFORE, BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that APA affirms that psychologists, as related to their professional codes (APA, 2016; EFPA, 2005; IUPS, 2008), have an ethical responsibility to be leaders of social-justice/human-rights initiatives, including initiatives aimed at achieving equality for all girls and women (consistent with various UN documents, including the UN 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) and initiatives aimed at empowering women worldwide—the latter being one of the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2023).

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that APA advocates for national and international funding supporting education, research, practice, and policies promoting and protecting all girls' and women's human rights.¹

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¹ The language of girls and women is inclusive of transgender and gender-diverse children and adults who are impacted by systemic sexism via socialization or lived experience as girls or women.

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