

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Dr. Wendi Williams



**THE QUINTESSENCE SERIES:
Interdisciplinary and International Work by SCPs**

INTERDISCIPLINARY PRESENCE

Dr. Williams is a Professor of Education and Dean of the School of Education at Mills College. She is the current president of APA's Division 35 Society for the Psychology of Women. Dr. Williams is well known for her work examining the intersections of education and mental health and Black women's liberatory leadership. As an educator and psychologist, Dr. Williams integrates her interdisciplinary expertise in education and counseling psychology.

SOURCE OF MOTIVATION

Dr. Williams shares that after majoring in psychology, she pursued various opportunities (e.g. working at Planned Parenthood and the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Los Angeles school-based mentoring program) that cultivated her twin interests in the fields of mental health/wellness and education. These experiences motivated her to examine ways to support young people through direct programming and preparing the professionals that work with them and their families/communities. She describes counseling psychology as a redemptive field, with a focus on prevention and intervention. The power to prevent life challenges and/or create a new path focus is what attracted her to the field.



BARRIERS

One of the challenges of interdisciplinary work, Dr. Williams notes, is working in teams where stakeholders may not share the same language. She also identifies the challenge of being on the fringes of two fields as being difficult.



IMPACT

Dr. Williams notes that the fields of education and psychology need one another. She works to strengthen this interdisciplinary focus in her professional life, be that her own career path or collaborative partnerships within APA and/or the wider public. This interdisciplinary focus is central to Dr. Williams' work in examining how schools can be anchor institutions in communities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Dr. Williams examines the intersections of race, gender, and class in her work. She is building frameworks to promote anti-racist attitudes in childhood and define leadership practice among Black women.



ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

Dr. Williams' advice for graduate students is to "follow your heart." She encourages students to be brave and to innovate. She reflects that "we need to hear where we need to go from our graduate students."

