

## **Celebrating Jewish American History Month: Recognizing the Contributions Jewish American Psychologists**

Roseanne L. Flores

May is Jewish American Heritage Month. This month, we celebrate and acknowledge the rich and diverse contributions of Jewish Americans who helped enrich American culture and society.

This month as the 2022-2023 President of EPA, I would like to highlight some of the contributions of Jewish American psychologists who were at the forefront of many theoretical and groundbreaking research findings that helped shape the psychology field. Several served as presidents of the Eastern Psychological Association.

### **Alfred Adler (1870 – 1937) <sup>1,2</sup>**



Alfred Adler was born in 1870, just outside of Vienna, to Pauline (Beer) and Leopold Adler, a Jewish couple. In 1895 he graduated with a medical degree from the University of Vienna. In 1907 Adler began meeting with Sigmund Freud, Rudolf Reitler and Wilhelm Stekel. Together they formed the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, of which Adler was the first president. In 1911 Adler broke with Freud and his view of psychoanalysis, and in 1912, he founded the Society for Individual Psychology. Adler's theory argued for the holistic view of the person and social equality. Adler was one of the co-founders of the psychoanalytic movement. In the 1930s, Adler immigrated to the United States for a professorship at the Long Island College of Medicine after several of his clinics closed in Austria. In 1937 Adler died suddenly during a three-week visit to the University of Aberdeen.

### **Solomon E. Asch** <sup>3,4</sup>



Solomon Asch was born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1907, to a Polish-Jewish family. In 1920 he immigrated to the United States and lived with his family on the Lower east side of Manhattan. Asch attended the Townsend Harris High School, attached to the City College of New York. In 1928 he earned his bachelor's degree in psychology from the City College of New York. In 1930 and 1932, he received a master's degree and Ph.D. from Columbia University. Asch held faculty positions at Brooklyn College and the New School of Social Research, and in 1947, he moved to Swarthmore College, where he remained until 1966.

Solomon Asch is considered a pioneer of social psychology and Gestalt psychology.

During the 1950s, he became known for his conformity experiments that demonstrated the effects of social pressure on conformity. His research showed that individuals were likely to conform to a group, even when they believed it was incorrect. From 1966-1972 he was the director and distinguished professor of psychology at the Institute for Cognitive Studies at Rutgers University. In 1972 he moved to the University of Pennsylvania, where he remained until 1979 when he retired. In 1967 Asch received the Distinguished Contribution Award from the American Psychological Association. Today he is listed as number 41 on the American Psychological Association's list of the 100 most eminent psychologists of the 20th century.

### **Sandra Lipshitz Bem (1944 -2014)** <sup>5,6</sup>

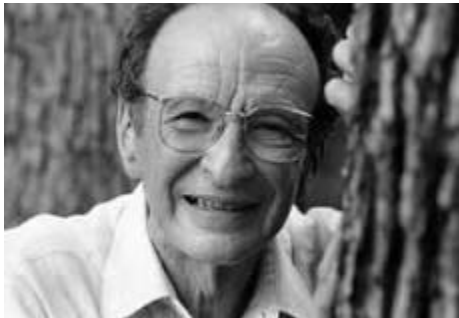


Sandra Bem was born in 1944 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Peter and Lillian Lipsitz and raised by them in a government-subsidized neighborhood for the first eight years of her life. In 1965

she received her degree in psychology from the Margaret Morrison Carnegie College, now known as Carnegie–Mellon University. At the college, she met her future husband, Daryl Bem. In 1968 she obtained her Ph.D. in development from the University of Michigan.

Bem held faculty positions at Carnegie Mellon University and Stanford University, where she worked until 1978. In 1978 after being denied tenure at Stanford, she became a psychology professor and the director of women's studies at Cornell University. She developed the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) and gender schema theory which elucidated the role of society and culture in transmitting ideas about sex and gender. In 1995 Sandra Bem was named an "Eminent Woman in Psychology" by the American Psychological Association Divisions of General Psychology and History of Psychology.

### **Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005)<sup>7,8</sup>**



Urie Bronfenbrenner was born in Moscow in 1917 to Russian Jewish parents Alexander Bronfenbrenner and Eugenie Kamenetski. When he was six, his family relocated to the United States and settled in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 1938 he received his bachelor's in psychology and music from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. In 1940 he received a master's degree from Harvard and his doctorate in developmental psychology from the University of Michigan in 1942. Urie served as an assistant professor at the University of Michigan and, in 1948, at the Department of Human Development at Cornell University. While at Cornell, he focused his work on child development and is best known for his bioecological model of human development. In 1964 he was invited to serve on a federal panel to develop a method to counteract the effects of poverty on child development. In 1965 based on the committee's work, he co-founded the National Head Start program. In 1986 he was elected as President of Division 7 of the American Psychological Association; in 1987 was awarded the "Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychology in the Public Interest" from the American Psychological Association, and in 1996 awarded the "Lifetime Contribution to Developmental Psychology in the Service of Science and Society Award" from the American Psychological Association.

**Jerome S. Bruner (1915-2016) <sup>9,10</sup>**



Jerome Seymour Bruner was born in 1915 in New York City to Herman and Rose Bruner, Polish Jewish immigrants. In 1937 he obtained a bachelor's degree in psychology from Duke University and a master's degree and Ph.D. in psychology from Harvard University in 1939 and 1941, respectively. Bruner served in the U.S. Army's Intelligence Corps during World War II.

In 1945 he returned to Harvard University as a psychology professor focusing his research on cognitive and educational psychology; in 1972, Bruner taught at the University of Oxford as a professor of experimental psychology, where he focused on language development. In 1980 Bruner returned to the United States and, in 1981, became a faculty member at the New School for Social Research, where he focused on the development of a theory of narrative construction. Jerome Bruner was a leader of the Cognitive Revolution and helped put cognition at the center of psychology. Today he is listed as number 28 on the American Psychological Association's list of the 100 most eminent psychologists of the 20th century.

### **Florence Denmark (1932-present)** <sup>11,12,13</sup>



Florence, Denmark, was born in 1932 in Philadelphia. In 1952 she graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Pennsylvania with honors in history and psychology. In 1958 she earned a Ph.D. in social psychology from the University of Pennsylvania. Florence Denmark began her career as an adjunct professor at Queens College of the City University of New York. In 1964 she was appointed an instructor of psychology at Hunter College and became a full professor in 1974. While at Hunter, she was also on faculty at The Graduate Center, City University of New York. She also served as the Executive Officer of the Psychology doctoral programs at CUNY.

In 1988 joined the faculty at Pace University and became the Robert Scott Pace Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Chair of the Department of Psychology. Florence is best known for her scholarship on issues related to women and gender, leadership, and international psychology.

In 1980, she was elected as the fifth woman president of the American Psychological Association and the first Jewish woman of the APA. She was also elected president of the New York State Psychological Association, **the Eastern Psychological Association**, the International Council of Psychologists, and Psi Chi (the International Honor Society of Psychology). Florence Denmark also served as president of APA's Division 1 (General Psychology), an APA NGO representative to the United Nations, and a founding member and president of APA's Division 52 (International Psychology).

### **Mary Henle (1913-2007)** <sup>14,15</sup>



Mary Henle was born in 1913 to a Jewish family in Cleveland, Ohio. Her father was a businessman, and her mother was a physician. In 1934 she received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Smith College and a master's degree in 1935, where she worked with Eleanor

Gibson and Kurt Koffka, which sparked her interest in Gestalt Psychology. In 1939 she received her Ph.D. in Psychology from Bryn Mawr College.

After completing her Ph.D., Mary Henle worked as a research assistant at Swarthmore College, where she encountered Wolfgang Köhler. In 1946, Solomon Asch invited her to become a professor at the New School for Social Research in New York City, where she remained until the end of her career.

Mary Henle considered herself a Gestalt Psychologist and engaged in empirical research. She also researched the history of ideas in psychology. Her research and scholarship culminated in the writing of eight books. In addition, she was the president of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Division of the History of Psychology (1971-1972), the (APA) Division of Theoretical Psychology (1974-1975), and the **Eastern Psychological Association (1981-1982)**.

### **Elizabeth Loftus (1944 – present) <sup>16,17</sup>**



Elizabeth Loftus was born Elizabeth Fishman in 1944 to a Jewish family in California. Her father, Sidney Fishman, was a doctor, and her mother, Rebecca Fishman, was a librarian. In 1966 she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics and psychology from the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1967 and 1970, she received a master's and Ph. D in mathematical psychology from Stanford University. She worked as a cognitive psychologist at the New School for Social Research in New York City from 1970-1973. In 1973 she became an Assistant Professor at the University of Washington, where her work focused on criminal investigations and real-world investigations. She remained at the University of Washington until 2001. In 2001 she left the University of Washington and became a distinguished professor in the Department of Criminology, Law and Society and the Department of Psychological Science at the University of California, Irvine (UCI).

Elizabeth Loftus has published over 20 books and 600 articles and is best known for her work on memory and how new experiences can often contaminate memory leading to distortions. She has served as president of the Association for Psychological Science, the Western Psychological

Association, and the American Psychology-Law Society. Dr. Loftus has been a consultant and expert eyewitness on hundreds of high-profile cases, and in 2022, she was named one of the world's top female scientists. Today, she is ranked 58 on the American Psychological Association's list of the 100 most eminent psychologists of the 20th century.

**Stanley Milgram (1933 – 1984)** <sup>18,19</sup>



Stanley Milgram was born in 1933 in the Bronx to Jewish parents who immigrated to the United States from Romania and Hungary during World War. His father, Samuel Milgram, was a baker. After Samuel's death, his mother, Adele Israel, became the baker. In 1954 Milgram received a bachelor's degree in political science from Queens College in New York. In 1961, Milgram received a Ph.D. in social psychology from Harvard after enrolling in Harvard's Office of Special Students. In 1960 he became an Assistant Professor at Yale University and served on the faculty of Harvard University from 1963-1966. In 1967 he accepted an offer to become a tenured full professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, where he taught until he died in 1984 at 51 from a heart attack. Milgram is best known for his obedience experiments that demonstrated the tendency for individuals to obey commands issued by an authority figure; Solomon Asch and Gordon Allport influenced him. Stanley Milgram ranks 46 on the American Psychological Association's list of the 100 most eminent psychologists of the 20th century.

## Walter Mischel (1930 - 2018) <sup>20,21</sup>



Walter Mischel was born in Vienna, Austria, to Salomon Mischel and Lola Leah Schreck, his parents. In 1938 when he was eight years old, he and his parents fled to the United States after the Nazi occupation of Vienna.

Mischel and his family moved to Brooklyn, NY, where they settled. In 1951 and 1953, Mischel received his bachelor's degree and master's degree from New York University. In 1956 he received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the Ohio State University.

Walter Mischel served on the faculty at the University of Colorado, Harvard University, and Stanford University. In 1983, he became a faculty member in the Department of Psychology at Columbia University, where he remained until the end of his career. Mischel is best known for his work on delayed gratification in what has become known as the "marshmallow test." In 2007, he was elected president of the Association for Psychological Science. He also served as president of the American Psychological Association Division of Social and Personality Psychology, and the Association for Research in Personality. Walter Mischel is ranked number 25 on the American Psychological Association's list of the 100 most eminent psychologists of the 20th century.



**Robert J. Sternberg (1949 - present) <sup>22,23</sup>**



Robert Sternberg was born in 1949 to a Jewish family and grew up in New Jersey. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale University and a Ph.D. from Stanford University. In 1975 he joined the Department of Psychology at Yale as an assistant professor. In 2005 he became the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Tufts University, leaving in 2010 to become the provost at Oklahoma State University. In 2013, Sternberg was named the new president of the University of Wyoming. After resigning from the University of Wyoming presidency, Sternberg joined the Department of Human Development faculty at Cornell University.

Sternberg is known for his triarchic theory of intelligence and theories on creativity, wisdom, and thinking styles. He has served as the 2003 president of the American Psychological Association, the 2007-2008 president of the **Eastern Psychological Association**, and the past president of the Federation of Associations in the Behavioral and Brain Sciences. Robert Sternberg ranks number 60 on the American Psychological Association's list of the 100 most eminent psychologists of the 20th century.

**David Wechsler (1896 -1981) <sup>24</sup>**



David Wechsler was born in a Jewish family in Lespezi, Romania, and immigrated to the United States with his parents early in life. He was at the City University of New York and Columbia University, receiving a master's degree in 1917 and a doctorate in 1925 under the guidance of Robert Woodworth. David Wechsler is best known for the development of the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) created in 1939, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC)

developed in 1949, and the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI) developed in 1967. In 1932 David Wechsler became chief psychologist at Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital, where he remained until 1967. David Wechsler is ranked 51 on the American Psychological Association's list of the 100 most eminent psychologists of the 20th century.

**Ethel Tobach (1921- 2015)** <sup>25,26</sup>



Ethel Tobach was born in 1921 in Miaskovka, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, to Jewish parents. To escape the pogroms, her parents fled to Palestine, where her father died. After his death, her mother immigrated to the United States, where she initially lived in Philadelphia and eventually moved to Brooklyn, New York, when she was ten. In 1949 she received her BA in psychology from Hunter College of the City University of New York. In 1952 and 1957, she received an MA and Ph.D. from New York University in Psychology under the tutelage of T. C. Schneirla, an eminent comparative psychologist. Dr. Tobach worked at the American Museum of Natural History and served on the faculty of NYU, Hunter College, the CUNY Graduate Center, and Yeshiva University.

In 1964, she became the co-founder of the Animal Behavior Society. In 1972, she was the vice president of the New York Academy of Sciences. In 1983, she and Gary Greenberg founded the International Society for Comparative Psychology, serving as the Society's first president. In 1984 -1985 she was named president of the American Psychological Association (APA)'s Division of Comparative and Physiological Psychology. From 1987-1988 Dr. Tobach served as the president of the **Eastern Psychological Association**. She also served as the APA's Division of Peace Psychology president.

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