



## Twenty-Fourth Annual Symposium Eminent Women in Psychology Historical and Personal Perspectives

### Excerpts

#### **Agnes N. O'Connell, Chair and Discussant Montclair State University**

For the last twenty-four years at the APA annual meeting, the Symposium on Eminent Women in Psychology: Historical and Personal Perspectives has celebrated women's lives and strengths, their heritage in APA and in the field of psychology. The idea for presenting reflections of eminent women in psychology was generated from a series of workshops at national and regional conventions that I chaired as Head of the Division 35 Task Force on Women Doing Research in the mid-1970s. These workshops underscored the need to preserve the contributions of women to the field of psychology as well as the need to highlight women who were strong, resilient role models. The Task Force recommended that the stories of eminent women be made known (O'Connell, A. N., Alpert, J., Richardson, M. S., Rotter, N., Ruble, D. N., & Unger, R. K., 1978). The first Symposium on Eminent Women in Psychology originated an extraordinary and unusual annual tradition at the APA annual meetings.

I organized and chaired the first Symposium in 1979 featuring Mary Ainsworth, Margaret Hubbard Jones, Molly Harrower, and Mary Henle with Dorothy Eichorn and Stephanie Shields as discussants. Nancy Russo served as discussant in 1980 and continued with me as coauthor and coeditor for works on eminent women for more than a decade (O'Connell & Russo, 1980; 1983; 1988; 1990; 1991). For the APA Centennial in 1992 and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the APA Divisions in 1996, I developed with Louise Vetter a large exhibit of more than 100 brief biographies and photographs of eminent women in psychology. The latest published work, *Models of Achievement: Reflections of Eminent Women in Psychology, Volume 3* (O'Connell, 2001), contains 429 pages of autobiographies, integrative overview chapters of the sociohistorical context of the twentieth century, and in-depth analyses of the patterns and profiles of achievement of 53 eminent women.

Cumulatively, these reflections and assessments provide a major knowledge base for the study of women's lives and the evolution of psychology at the same time as they increase the visibility of distinguished women and their contributions, act as a source of inspiration, and serve as a catalyst for transformations of psychology and society.

The participants for this 24<sup>th</sup> Symposium, like their predecessors, are senior psychologists who have been recognized for making pioneering, groundbreaking "outstanding and unusual contributions" to psychology—achieving Fellow status in APA and other professional organizations, receiving prestigious national awards, publishing significant books and hundreds of journal articles, serving as editors and on national boards and committees, making hundreds of professional presentations, and holding major leadership positions. The impressive honors they have received and the impact of their various contributions on psychology underscore their distinguished status and facilitate their serving as role models.

#### **Nancy E. Cantor**

*A prominent cognitive, personality, and social psychologist, Dr. Cantor is Chancellor and Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She was former Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs at Michigan University. Her books include Personality, Cognition, and Social Interaction; Personality and Social Intelligence; and Personality Psychology: Recent Trends and Emerging Directions. Her awards and honors include the APA Distinguished Scientific Award for Early Career Contribution to Psychology (1985), the Women of Achievement Award of the Anti-Defamation League, the US Department of Labor Women's Bureau Work-Life Family Award, Fellow status in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, APA Division 8 and APS, and membership in the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Science. She has served as President of APA Division 8 (1992-1993), Vice Chair of the National Research Council Committee on Women in Science and Engineering, Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of the American Association for Higher Education, and on numerous other national boards.*

My work has focused on four aspects of personality and social behavior that I see as critical to individual health and well-being. Beginning with what might be called "constructive cognition," it is important to understand the particulars of an individual's

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**The Symposium, sponsored by Division One, was presented at the Convention of the American Psychological Association in Chicago, August, 2002.**

construal of a situation or event in order to then make sense of his or her goals, strategies, and purposes – *what he or she is trying to do*. Construals and goals, in turn, set the stage for individuals to draw upon *social affordances* (support; partnerships, unique opportunities) in the service of making progress on personal goals. Finally, as we pursue our goals across the life course, there are opportunities to engage in new tasks and to set new goals, thus fundamentally *changing* personality.

Perhaps not surprisingly, my scholarly work has very much informed my approach to the issues in higher education that I face as Chancellor at Illinois. For example, my commitment to working on diversity – intellectual and social – is clearly influenced by the belief that we will create the most vibrant intellectual environments for scholarship and teaching when we bring alternative construals to bear on the issues of debate in the laboratory and in the classroom. Similarly, I believe that the best educational environment is one that simultaneously cultivates in students the desire to try new things and think in new ways in the “protected” space of the campus, and the desire to remain socially responsible and connected to issues of pressing concern in the world beyond the campus. In a related vein, I very much hope that our institutions can develop practices that enable faculty to take on new roles and tasks over time and to work in collaborative and interdisciplinary environments that provide opportunities for professional growth.

On a more personal note, I suspect that my interest in the diversity of individuals’ life experiences, beliefs, and values, and in the benefits of bringing these differences together, derives from my upbringing in New York City, from the social activism of my family, and from the impact on me of major social movements afoot in my youth (e.g., civil rights movement, women’s movement, anti-war movement). I have also been fortunate to have received great sustenance in my career (and life) from wonderful women colleagues. Through some mix of these experiences, I have come to believe strongly in the possibility for beliefs to mobilize goals, and for individuals to work within our social environments to effect change for the better.

## Jean Lau Chin

*A recognized expert and leader in cultural competence, psychotherapy, community mental health, women’s issues, and Asian American issues, Dr. Chin is the President of APA Division 35. She is President of CEO Services, a clinical and consulting firm, Clinical Director of the Grief Counseling Program, and core faculty at the Center for Multicultural Training in Psychology at the Boston University School of Medicine. She is the Praeger Series Editor for Race and Ethnicity in Psychology. Her books include Relationships Among Asian American Women; Community Health Psychology; Diversity in Psychotherapy: Race Ethnicity, and Gender; and Transference and Empathy in Asian American Psychotherapy. She is APA Fellow in Divisions 12, 35, and 45; has served as Chair of the APA Committee on Professional*

*Practice and Standards and the APA Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs. She is recipient of the Distinguished Contribution Award of the Asian American Psychological Association (2001), Outstanding Women Award from Patriot’s Trail Girl Scouts (1999), Leading Women Award from Women in Philanthropy (1991), and other awards. She is currently on the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention National Advisory Council and has served on numerous other national boards.*

My parents were Chinese laundry owners, the occupation of probably 80% of the immigrant Chinese American families of my generation, an occupation of choice because there were no choices following the anti-Chinese legislation of the times. An emphasis on Chinese cultural values and practices was an important part of my early upbringing.

During my education, I was the only, or one of three Asian students in the schools I attended (including Brooklyn College and Columbia University—Teachers College). Most significant to my education is what I would describe as the differences between the Confucian and Socratic methods of learning. Confucian learning occurs through listening and taking in, and one benefits from the wisdom and knowledge of one’s elders and the masters. This contrasts with the Socratic and western forms of learning that emphasize vocal classroom participation, challenging the status quo, and changing the obvious. I learned of these differences, without mentors to guide me, and often found myself subject to misunderstanding and misjudgment.

What is significant about my career path is my transformation and transcendence as a professional and as a person. To all my roles, *I brought my ability to look at things from the outside* and felt I contributed to an innovative and transformational approach. The second striking feature of my career development was the tendency of others to view me in rather stereotypic ways. My small size, distinct Asian culture, and different professional training all contributed to stereotypic expectations. Negatively, it resulted in a questioning of my managerial, clinical, and professional abilities. Positively, I was able to remain anchored in the pride I had gained about who I was, and in what I believed. Not only had I learned that I thought differently, but also I had learned to advocate for that which I held dear, i.e., serving the underserved, promoting ethnic minority issues, social equity, valuing differences, and cultural competence.

I believe I have been a rare type of psychologist with a foot in clinical work, management, and scholarly pursuits. My diverse interests and work mirror my commitment to diversity and difference. The contrast between the cultures of the East and West summarize the challenges of integration for those of us living in a bicultural environment. There is much that cannot be integrated. Not only is the vocabulary and language structure of English and Chinese very different, but so is the different emphasis of social and cultural values. These differences require a

consciousness and vigilance that is unnecessary in the absence of racial/ethnic differences. Social gatherings and differences in social customs, food, and values must be contemplated. Sometimes it means leading different lives that do not always mix. I have found my sources of strength and support in the many colleagues with whom I have shared "one mind." I learned that my strategies for resolving conflict sometimes means not to seek integration, but to seek divergence in the things we do and the thoughts we have.

Another challenge has been that of being an Asian American woman. Few or no Asian women went on for their doctorates in my era, much less major in psychology. From my experiences, I have learned the importance of perseverance, and of openness to new learning. I have learned that the need for integration must be balanced by the valuing of differences and the need for divergence. The interaction of stereotypes, culture, and one's self pervades one's personal and professional life. Students and aspiring professionals should allow themselves to think out of the box, but to be true to themselves and their cultures. For students and aspiring professionals, I'll end with one of my mother's sayings. "Learning anything is good. No learning is ever wasted."

## Rochel Gelman

*An internationally recognized scholar in the area of developmental cognitive science, Dr. Gelman is Co-Director of Cognitive Science and Professor of Psychology at Rutgers University and Professor Emerita of Psychology at UCLA. Her books include *The Child's Understanding of Number* that has been translated into Japanese and Italian; *Attention in Learning: Research and Theory* that is a citation classic, and *Cognitive and Perceptual Development*. Several of her hundreds of journal articles and chapters have been translated into Chinese and Japanese or become citation classics. Dr. Gelman is a Fellow in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, an APS William James Fellow, a Fellow in APA Divisions 3 and 7, and an Inaugural Fellow in the Cognitive Science Society. She has served as President of Division 7; and is the recipient of the APA Early Career Research Contribution Award (1976), the APA Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award (1995), and the APA Division 7 Outstanding Mentor Award. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Piaget Society, the APS Governing Board, and the National Research Council Board of Behavioral, Cognitive, and Sensory Sciences and is coeditor of the *International Encyclopedia of Psychology, Developmental Sections*.*

I had no idea that I would end up an academic, let alone in this symposium. My parents emigrated to Toronto in the 20's having their education cut short in elementary school. Although there were almost no books at home, the tradition of education was omnipresent in my environment, which included a prosperous neighborhood that was overwhelmingly Jewish. Like other kids, I expected to do well at school

and listen to my teachers. The truth was that I preferred the Math and Science track because it meant that I would not have to memorize historical dates and the names of lots of plants. This left time for me to play in the band, continue music lessons, and socialize.

It was pretty much by accident that I ended up in the challenging Honours Psychology program at the University of Toronto and a whole new world, on both the cultural and educational side, opened up. I learned what it was like to have intellectual passion. My own was nurtured by the newly recruited members of the department, including Amsel, Berlyne, Mandler, Tulving, Walters. Importantly, no one gave the impression that women were less capable than men. We simply were all scientists in training, learning to do research, give presentations, and become serious scholars, bound for advanced study. The Psychology program outside requirements meant that I studied genetics and the Associationists. All of this has turned out to be deeply relevant to the gradual emergence of my views about concept acquisition and the nature of the learning involved. So did the fact that both my undergraduate and graduate education overlapped the Cognitive Revolution. As for my choice of graduate programs, another accident of luck. I, like my family, assumed I would go on at Toronto. George Mandler, the undergraduate chair had other ideas. I landed at UCLA during the early '60's. More luck. This was a great place at that time. The Mind was back in favor, the campus and the city were at the forefront of cultural developments, and political hope was in the air.

I am grateful for the support and intellectual freedom my terrific advisors (Jeffrey and Traabasso) gave me. I continued to study learning (especially as it permeated the work of Mathematical Psychology) and joined it with the field of development. I am sure that this double specialization influenced the design of my dissertation, an early successful training demonstration involving children who initially failed a battery of Piagetian conservation tasks. There was one problem. The children learned much too fast given the standard assumption that they lacked the relevant conceptual structure. So, I went in search of ways to uncover early cognitive competencies. I, and my many wonderful students, have put out a series of papers that has contributed to a major change in the empirical and theoretical landscape of cognitive development. There now is a multitude of illustrations of task settings where young children and even infants reveal pockets of competence. These demonstrations have forced me to re-examine my initial commitment to the traditional view of concept acquisition that has permeated the field, one based firmly on the Associationist account. I now am in search of a theory of learning that is compatible with a Rationalist position, hence my choice of such phrases as Rational Constructivism or Innate Learning. I know that many think such phrases are

self-contradictory. Yes, this is true for an Associationist theory. But it is not true for all theories of learning (See Gelman & Williams, 1998). There can be no question that experience feeds acquisitions, be these biologically favored or not. The issue is how to characterize supporting experiences and the nature of the learning processes that use these. My own position has shifted gradually from the associationist account of these for a straightforward reason. The cumulative data forced it.

As an academic I have had my ups and downs, including ones related to illness and difficult work settings. I am grateful for the amazing support of my husband and son, Randy and Adam Gallistel, as well as my many talented students who created the Friends of Rochel at an especially difficult time. Of all of my awards, I am proudest of the most recent one, Division 7's Outstanding Mentor award, which will be presented in Toronto.

### Florence W. Kaslow

*Director of the Florida Couples and Family Institute and President of Kaslow Associates, PA. Dr. Kaslow is a diplomate in forensic, clinical, family, sports psychology and sex therapy. Her many books include Voices in Family Psychology, Vols. I and II; The Military Family in Peace and War; Handbook of Relational Diagnosis; Painful Partings: Divorce and Its Aftermath; Handbook of Couple and Family Forensic Issues: A Sourcebook for Legal and Mental Health Professionals; and Comprehensive Handbook of Psychotherapy. Her many awards and honors include the APA Distinguished Contribution to Applied Psychology as a Professional Practice Award (1989), ABPP Award for Distinguished Service and Outstanding Contributions (1994), and the APA Distinguished Contributions to the International Advancement of Psychology Award (2000), and Fellow status in APA Divisions 12, 29, 37, 41, 42, 43, and 46. She founded specialized fields in psychology serving as the first President of the American Board of Forensic Psychology, first President of the International Family Therapy Association, and second President of APA Division 43. She has served as President of APA Division 46, the American Board of Family Psychology, and the Florida Association of Professional Family Mediators and as editor of the Journal of Marital and Family Therapy.*

I started working at age twelve and have not stopped working ever since – as a baby sitter, sales girl, dancing teacher, secretary, high school and college teacher, University and Medical School Professor and Dean, author and editor, and individual, couples and family therapist and coach. I worked out of necessity because my parents could not afford to pay for my college and graduate studies despite their emphasis on education. My ambition, determination, high grades, and extra curricular activities enabled me to get scholarships, fellowships and a grant for my dissertation writing.

Hearing tales of the various Eastern European countries my forbears and their extended "mishpucha" (in-law families) came from stimulated my interest, as did the many books I avidly read, about

"far away places with strange sounding names." When my husband, Sol, and I got married and started our family, we became a host family for a student from a different country each year. Valuing multiculturalism and having a great deal of sensitivity to, and appreciation of, all kinds of diversity were important principles for us. After a ten-year hiatus to get married, begin my career, and have two children, I did my doctoral studies at Bryn Mawr College.

There were no mentors on my horizon. I received a great deal of encouragement but had to find my own path. Perhaps that is why during my career when I identify a gap or a need, I launch an effort to fill it. For example, most of the 22 books I have authored or edited, plus the over 160 articles I have had published, grew out of looking for something about a topic in the literature that I could not find or needing a text to teach a course that did not exist. As head of a Section of Forensic Psychology/Psychiatry at Hahnemann Medical College in Philadelphia in the mid 1970's, I established and co-directed a Ph.D./J.D. program between Hahnemann and Villanova Law School, the third such program in the country.

My fascination with families led to family psychology being another major area of professional involvement. I helped spearhead the formation of APA Division of Family Psychology in the mid 1980's and became its second President and an early recipient of the Family Psychologist of the Year Award (1987). Today I serve as the Division's representative to Council, while my daughter is serving as Division President. In 1987 at an international family therapy conference in Prague, Czechoslovakia, we formed the International Family Therapy Association (IFTA) and I was elected the first President (1987-1990). In 1990 at a meeting of IAAP in Japan I was asked to be a founding member (the only woman) of the International Academy of Family Psychology and served as its President from 1998-2002.

One of my most important contributions is the Holocaust Dialogue Group between 25 Jewish and German second and third generation descendants of perpetrators and victims, which I have led annually since 1994 and that is held in conjunction with the IFTA meetings. Each session is a moving, gripping saga aimed at healing the pain that has been transmitted; these in-gatherings also add meaning and purpose to mine.

Along the way I've enjoyed mentoring students, encouraging colleagues to write and publish and making friends in many countries, hopefully exemplifying some of the principles, values and beliefs articulated in my work. Psychology has provided me with many wonderful avenues to explore and on which to build. To be an "eminent woman" is delicious icing on a rich and ever expanding cake.