

Inside the Psychologist's Studio: Eleanor Maccoby

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Some of the first women to enter the field of psychological research sought to examine differences between the sexes, even as they suffered from gender discrimination themselves, APS William James Fellow Eleanor Maccoby recently said in an interview with APS Past President Kay Deaux.

Maccoby, known widely for her contributions to developmental and gender studies research, spoke to Deaux at Stanford University on August 26, 2013, about Maccoby's seminal work in child rearing. Maccoby noted that when she enrolled in graduate school and devoted herself to psychology entirely, the "heartland" of psychology was learning theory, based upon B.F. Skinner's ideas, and that she considered herself a "hardcore behaviorist" at the time.

Maccoby became involved in the field of developmental psychology when she served on a team headed by Robert Sears, a psychology professor who specialized in child psychology. The team studied child rearing and the relationships between parents and children. That served to launch Maccoby's career in child psychology.

The Stanford professor emerita has also been influential in the field of gender studies. Her most influential book, *The Psychology of Sex Differences*, written with colleague Carol Jacklin in 1974, reviewed more than 1,600 studies that compared the sexes, and concluded that many commonly held beliefs about sex differences turned out to have no basis in fact. They called these beliefs "myths".

When asked how she became interested in gender issues, Maccoby replied, "All of us who were professional women at that time in a sense lived [with the consequences of sexism]. A group of us did work to try to see if we could redress some of those things."

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