



## Walter Mischel: February 22, 1930–September 12, 2018

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How to cite: Stewart, R. A., & Cheyne, A. (2019). Walter Mischel: February 22, 1930–September 12, 2018. *Social Behavior and Personality: An international journal*, 47(1), e8222

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### Keywords

Walter Mischel; obituary

Our team at *Social Behavior and Personality* wishes to recognize the life and achievements of Walter Mischel, one of the 20th century's eminent social psychologists. Dr. Mischel is most widely known for his breakthrough “marshmallow test” which was designed to assess delayed gratification in children—would a preschool child choose to eat one marshmallow immediately or wait from 10 to 20 minutes to receive a better reward of *two* marshmallows? Mischel found lasting correlations between the child's level of self-control and measures of general success in life. His conclusions were expanded into many other settings, retested, and often critiqued, yet this remains one of the most powerful psychology experiments in the popular imagination.

Walter Mischel received his doctorate working under George Kelly and Julian Rotter at Ohio State University, before establishing his professional career at Colorado, Harvard, and Stanford Universities. From 1983 he worked at Columbia University, where he was later given emeritus status. He received awards and recognition for his contribution to social psychology throughout an extended career and retired only recently in 2017.

Dr. Mischel continued to delve into child development, self-control, and delayed gratification, as well as taking an alternative perspective of personality psychology. He questioned the accepted understanding of personality traits as persistent and stable across situations, and reasoned that personality was much more dynamic and dependent on context.

Walter Mischel passed away at his home last September at the age of 88, following a remarkable career. He is survived by three daughters, six grandchildren, and his partner, Michele Myers.