

IN MEMORIAM

Scott O. Lilienfeld (1960–2020)



Dr. Scott O. Lilienfeld, one of the most influential figures in contemporary clinical psychology, died at his home in Atlanta, Georgia, on September 30, 2020, after a courageous struggle with pancreatic cancer. He is survived by his loving wife, Candice Basterfield, and his sister, Laura Lilienfeld. He was 59 years old.

A 2014 published survey cited Dr. Lilienfeld as one of the 350 most eminent psychologists of the modern era. His contributions were prodigious and spanned psychopathy and personality disorders, psychiatric classification and diagnosis, dissociation, memory and trauma, neuroscience, and cultural sensitivity. He authored, coauthored, and coedited more than 500 articles and book chapters and 20 books, including the *Encyclopedia of Clinical Psychology*. Perhaps more than any other scholar in clinical psychological science, Dr. Lilienfeld played leading roles in distinguishing evidence-based from pseudoscientific mental health practices, in applying scientific thinking principles to teaching psychology, and in stemming the tide of poorly validated psychotherapeutic and assessment methods. Although his work at times provoked controversy, he was staunchly committed to using science to better humankind.


Born on December 23, 1960, in New York City, Dr. Lilienfeld received his AB in psychology from Cornell University in 1982, and PhD in psychology (clinical) from the University of Minnesota in 1990 under the primary mentorship of Dr.

David Lykken. His PhD project developed and validated a measure of psychopathic personality, the Psychopathic Personality Inventory, which has become the most widely cited self-report psychopathy measure in the world. Dr. Lilienfeld then assumed an assistant professorship in the clinical psychology program at SUNY Albany (New York). In 1994, he moved to Emory University, where he was a Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Psychology. He also held a visiting professorship at the University of Melbourne.

Dr. Lilienfeld devoted much of his career to disseminating psychological science to the layperson. For nearly a decade, he was a columnist in *Scientific American Mind*, contributing a regular “Facts and Fictions in Mental Health” feature later turned into a trade book. His book, *50 Great Myths of Popular Psychology*, translated into more than 20 languages, explores widespread psychological misconceptions. His intellectual reach extended to writing introductory psychology and graduate textbooks, to op-eds and coverage in major news outlets, TV appearances, radio programs, podcasts, and lectures across the world.

Dr. Lilienfeld received numerous award for early career and lifetime achievements from the APA, Association for Psychological Science, and the Society for the Scientific study of Psychopathy. He served as president of the Society for a Science of Clinical Psychology (twice) and of the Society for the Scientific study of Psychopathy. He made his mark in editorial roles including as editor-in-chief of *Clinical Psychological Science*, past editor and founder of the *Scientific Review of Mental Health Practice*, and as associate editor of the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, *Applied and Preventive Psychology*, and the *Archives of Scientific Psychology*.

Dr. Lilienfeld’s many students will remember him as a devoted mentor who thrived on sharing his passion for psychological science and his dedication to fostering the next generation of critical thinkers. On a personal side, he will be remembered as warm, kind, and generous, a lover of good food, a voracious reader, and an avid traveler, whether it was to visit a college or university to give a talk or to come as close as he ever did to putting work aside by exploring national parks.

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