Sandra Lipsitz Bem, professor of psychology emerita and former director of women’s studies (now feminist, gender, and sexuality studies), integrated the political, personal, and professional throughout life. In 1965, a senior at Carnegie Institute of Technology (CIT), now Carnegie-Mellon University (CMU), Sandy met Daryl J. Bem, a new assistant professor. They married four months later, shortly before Sandy left for the University of Michigan. Two years later, now a Ph.D. in psychology, Sandy joined Daryl on the CMU faculty. Stanford hired them both in 1969.

In 1978, Cornell successfully recruited Sandy, by then widely recognized in gender psychology, as associate professor of psychology and director of women’s studies, and also hired Daryl as professor of psychology. *An Unconventional Family*, 1998, includes Sandy’s readable and frank account of their egalitarian marriage, about which they spoke to many groups and which was featured in the inaugural issue of *Ms.*
From the mid-1960s to the 1980s, the Bems were visible and vocal activists pushing for gender equality in households and at work. Both were expert witnesses in two notable sex discrimination cases. The first, filed by NOW against the *Pittsburgh Press* for segregating classified ads, was appealed to the Supreme Court, which ruled 5-4 in favor of NOW. The Bems were also critical witnesses in an FCC hearing that accused AT&T of discriminating against women. In a widely publicized settlement, AT&T agreed to modify its recruiting and hiring practices.

Because Sandy had such considerable public stature, people were sometimes surprised that she took up so little physical space. At 4 ft 9 inches, she could be mistaken for a preteen. But even as a child she already knew she was exceptionally smart, strong, and capable—and so did those around her, including mother Lillian, father Pete, and younger sister Bev as well as her much loved grandmothers. From 3 to 11 she was star pupil at Hillel Academy and later shone at Pittsburgh’s Taylor Allerdice High School. Yet Sandy was without pretension and arrogance, straightforward, open, and easy to talk to—sometimes unsettlingly frank and blunt but always clear and incisive and never self-important. She was far from the stereotype of a famous politically engaged intellectual and distinguished scholar, yet that is what she was—as well as a deeply loving mother, sister, spouse, and friend.

Sandra Bem made significant contributions to mainstream psychology, to feminist scholarship, and to their intersection in feminist psychology, but her work also resonated beyond the academy. Her early “Training the woman to know her place: The power of a nonconscious ideology” was published well before the word ‘sexism’ took hold. In it, Sandy denied that sex differences were mainly biological and that sexual inequality was inevitable. These were radical claims then and in many circles still are.

In the early 1970s she proposed that “masculinity” and “femininity” were not opposite ends of a continuum but could be conceptualized and measured independently. The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) did exactly that. Sandy’s research found “androgyny,” high BSRI scores on both “femininity” and “masculinity,” strongly correlated
with other measures of psychological well-being. The BSRI immediately spawned considerable research and continues in use today.

In spite of early career awards for androgyny research, Sandy moved on. In the late 1970s she proposed gender schema theory, a cognitive account of “sex typing.” Drawing from social, cognitive, and developmental psychologies, she proposed that gender schemas get incorporated (or not) into conceptual maps, shaping how people see themselves and the world. This work appeared in top psychology journals and in Signs, a major interdisciplinary feminist journal. With significant implications for gender development, it inspired many dissertations.

This shift in research emphasis coincided with full immersion in parenting Emily and Jeremy, both preschoolers when the Bems moved to Ithaca. Sandy and Daryl were fully committed to “raising gender-aschematic children”—kids not incorporating cultural ideals of “femininity” or “masculinity” in their sense of who they were or should be. But this was challenging in a “gender-schematic society,” which assumes that genitals determine not only someone’s potential role in baby-making but virtually everything else about them. Sandy’s Signs article argued for “inoculating” children against gender schemas and for postponing exposure to them. An Unconventional Family describes the Bems’ efforts, closing with Sandy’s interviews with Emily and Jeremy, then young adults; Daryl, no longer living in the household but still very much in the family, contributes an epilogue.

The Lenses of Gender, 1993, is a powerful multidisciplinary synthesis of Sandy’s and others’ work, arguing that androcentrism, gender polarization, and biological essentialism shape cultural discourses, social institutions, and the psyche itself. Viewing the world through these distorting gender lenses reproduces male dominance and power psychologically as well as systemically. Her earlier work questioned assumed links between bodily sex and psychological attributes. Lenses of Gender further decouples bodily sex and sexual desire, showing how heterosexism and compulsory heterosexuality are reproduced. She comments that her own
sexuality did "not mesh with the available cultural categories ... The sex-of-partner dimension implicit in the three categories of heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual seems irrelevant to my own particular pattern of erotic attractions and sexual experiences."

Active debates on *Lenses of Gender* followed. *Psychological Inquiry* published a lively exchange: four psychologists write analyses and Sandy, with brilliance, clarity and wit, offered a response that makes great reading and brings her voice to life. The book won major awards on publication, but is, arguably, undervalued and neglected. In true Sandy fashion, it is written so clearly and accessibly that some theorists dismiss it as overly simple.

Sandy Bem was an exceptional administrator even though it was a hat she did not care to wear. When she arrived at Cornell, Sandy seemed too frank, literal (not “nuanced” enough) and curt—tactless—to be an effective administrator. And yet she managed to transform women’s studies from what had been a struggling and often amateur effort into a serious academic program with regular lines filled by people whose research focused on gender and who could give courses on substantive areas in Women’s Studies as defined in the 1980s. She was hired soon after AAUW announced its Silver Snail Award, ‘won’ by Cornell because faculty women were fewer in number and lower in rank here than at any other Ivy League school. Sandy seized the moment, and she soon had made several innovative hiring arrangements of young faculty. Her inspired maneuvering continued, building a strong faculty base for the women’s studies program.

Sandy also enriched the intellectual life of the program. Her favorite question—usually delivered after a seminar, in a flat voice, whether the speaker was local faculty or a visiting grand dame, was: “So, why is this important?” Answers in discipline-internal language were off base. Sandy wanted accessible language, not jargon. And she was willing to tell anyone that the paper just heard was boring and not especially insightful.

In her 50s Sandy again changed course, following a dream she’d had
as an undergraduate. Reducing her teaching to half-time she enrolled in 1997 in Rutgers’ clinical psychology Psy.D program, opening a part-time psychotherapy practice in 2000 while continuing half-time at Cornell until her 2010 retirement. Her therapeutic specialty was helping people with serious trauma. Both her Rutgers supervisor, to whom she became very close, and an Ithaca psychotherapist who was a dear friend for over 30 years, have mentioned how deeply Sandy cared about her clients and how successfully she applied her keen intelligence to clinical work. Her capacity for observation was central to her therapeutic practice, and she found it deeply satisfying.

Sandy peacefully ended her own life at her home in Ithaca on May 20, 2014, one month before her 70th birthday. After being diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease four years earlier, she announced her intention to end her life, while she could still do so without assistance, if and when the disease became too debilitating for a meaningful quality of life. For much of her final year, Emily and new grandson Felix, Emily’s child, shared Sandy’s home, and Sandy reveled in her new role as Bubbe. But in late spring, keen observer that she was, she realized the time had come. Her sister Bev, herself terminally ill, came from Oregon to join in a family gathering celebrating Sandy, including sharing many “Sandy stories” with her and with one another.

In death as in life, Sandy was clear-headed, courageous, and forging new paths. Her choice to exit on her own terms and to do so openly has sparked conversations over many dinner tables. NPR interviewed Daryl and Emily about Sandy’s decision in September 2014, and in spring 2015 Hospicare announced the Sandra Lipsitz Bem Lecture Series on Compassionate Care and End-of-Life Issues, supported by an endowment from Daryl. On May 17, 2015, the New York Times Magazine featured Robin Marantz Henig’s “The Last Day,” a compassionate piece on Sandy’s life and death. Sandy holding Felix in her beautiful garden smiled out from the cover. We miss her keenly but know she would be proud.

_Sally McConnell-Ginet, Chair; Joan Jacobs Brumberg, committee member; Daryl J. Bem, husband; Carla Golden, Ithaca College_
colleague; Editorial help from Joanne E. Fortune and Kathryn March, committee members; Karen Gilovich, close friend