Sidney J. Blatt (1928–2014)

On May 11, 2014, Yale Emeritus Professor Sidney J. Blatt passed away in his sleep at his home in Hamden, Connecticut, at the age of 85. In a career spanning over 50 years, he made massive contributions to the fields of developmental psychopathology, personality and social psychology, attachment theory, and psychoanalysis.

Sid, as he was known by those who worked with him, entered Pennsylvania State University in 1946, graduating in 1952. He received his PhD degree from the University of Chicago in 1957, where he was trained, among others, by Carl Rogers, who remained a great influence. Sid then completed postdoctoral psychology training at the Michael Reese Hospital, and came to Yale in 1960 as an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology. In 1963, he became professor in the Departments of Psychology and Psychiatry and remained chief of the Psychology Section of the Department of Psychiatry for almost 50 years. He completed psychoanalytic training at the Western New England Institute for Psychoanalysis in 1972.

Sid was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on October 15, 1928, the eldest of three children. His parents had a sweet shop in downtown Philadelphia, where he grew up and where he also met his future wife, Ethel Shames. They were married for over 60 years, and were inseparable until his death. They raised three children, Susan, David, and Judy, and had nine grandchildren. Attachment relationships were not only central to Sid's academic work: He took immense pride and delight in his family.

Sid recounted on many occasions how some of his most productive ideas were inspired by events in his own life. Seeing his father weep at the grave of his mother, for instance, would later inform his formulations of a new theory of depression, distinguishing between two types of depressive experiences—one associated with loss and rejection, the other with self-criticism and problems with self-definition. This distinction became the basis for his *two-polarities model* of personality development, for which he is best known. This model argues that personality development evolves through a dialectic interaction between two fundamental psychological processes across the life span—the development of *interpersonal relatedness*, on the one hand, and *self-definition*, on the other. This "double helix theory of personality development" has provided researchers and clinicians with a comprehensive conceptual paradigm for exploring interactions among neurobiological, psychological, and sociocultural factors in adaptive and disrupted personality development. Furthermore, it linked processes involved in normal personality development to mechanisms of therapeutic action, as the synergistic interaction of interpersonal relatedness and self-definition also occurs in processes of therapeutic change, and may represent a "final common developmental pathway" through which interventions are effective.

Sid was a prolific writer, authoring or coauthoring more than 200 scientific papers and 17 books. A scientist-practitioner *avant-la-lettre*, his work reflects the ever-evolving combination of clinical work, conceptual thinking, and empirical research. In keeping with his insistence on the importance of a broad-based orientation and his love for the arts, his contributions extended to the influence of culture on personality development and the role of mental representations in art. He wrote a highly acclaimed book on the latter subject with his wife Ethel. He also developed several measures to assess personality dimensions involved in vulnerability for psychopathology, self and object representations, and boundary disturbances in thought disorders. Typical of Sid was his capacity to collaborate with others. He lived his theory: He not only had a tremendous capacity to form meaningful and productive relationships with others, but he always showed a deep respect for the views of others with whom he collaborated, respecting self-definition within relatedness, if you will. In line with his emphasis on the dialectic between relatedness and self-definition, anyone who collaborated with Sid can attest to the fact that these exchanges led to myriad new ideas, and transformed both his and their own views. These collaborations also spurred him to integrate new approaches right up to the end of his career. Even on the day before his death, he was working on a paper discussing the relationship between his two-polarities model and the recently formulated views on personality disorders in *DSM–5* and in the NIMH Research Domain Criteria program.

Sid was the recipient of numerous prestigious awards in each of the areas he contributed to, including the Distinguished Scientific Awards of Divisions 12 and 39 of the American Psychological Association, the Hans Strupp and Otto Weininger Awards for Distinguished Contributions to Psychoanalysis, the Mary S. Sigourney Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychoanalytic Theory and Research, and the Bruno Klopfer and Marguerite Hertz Awards for Distinguished Accomplishments in Personality Assessment.

He served as a visiting professor at the Austen Riggs Center in Massachusetts, the Menninger Clinic in Kansas, and the George Washington University in Washington; the Hampstead Child Therapy Clinic, Tavistock Centre, and University College London in the United Kingdom; Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Bar-Ilan University, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel; and the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium.

Sid was known and celebrated not only for his sparkling intelligence—he epitomized Erik Erikson's concept of generativity. He was a beloved and generous mentor to generations of students, fellows, and young researchers, and he took great delight in the fact that many have themselves gone on to distinguished careers in psychology and psychiatry.

With Sid's death, the field of developmental psychopathology has lost a great pioneer and intellectual giant. His legacy is the huge stamp he leaves on the field.

Patrick Luyten
University of Leuven and University College London