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## Book review

# Interpersonal relatedness and self-definition: Two primary lines of personality development and experiences of depression

**Sidney J. Blatt, *Experiences of Depression: Theoretical, Clinical, and Research Perspectives*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, 2004, ISBN 1-59147-095-1, xiii+359 pp, US\$40 (Hdbk)**

This enlightening book by Sidney J. Blatt, one of the leading psychoanalytic researchers of our time, is highly relevant to investigators and clinicians interested in personality development as well as depression. In *Experiences of Depression*, Blatt amalgamates nearly 30 years of work. He combines brilliant insights about clinical practice with a broad range of empirical research to enrich our understanding of individual differences in the personality vulnerabilities that underlie and foster depression. Blatt illuminates our understanding of the psychological and interpersonal worlds and the life experiences that contribute to the specific nature of depressive experiences. The book's comprehensive integration of theoretical, clinical, and empirical perspectives also demonstrates the significance of Blatt's broad theoretical conceptualizations.

Beginning in the 1970s, Blatt (Blatt, 1974, 1990, 1995; Blatt & Blass, 1990, 1996; Blatt & Shichman, 1983) proposed a model of personality development applicable to the study of both normal and pathological processes. Blatt characterized personality development as the integration of a person's capabilities for self-definition and interpersonal relatedness. The process of self-definition relates to "the development of a realistic, essentially positive and increasingly integrated self-definition and self-identity" (Blatt, 1991, p. 453). The process of interpersonal relatedness is defined as "the capacity to establish increasingly mature, reciprocal and satisfying interpersonal relationships" (Blatt, 1991, p. 453). These two basic modalities of human existence have been discussed in other theoretical contexts as autonomy and surrender (Angyal, 1951), agency and communion (Bakan, 1966), and achievement or power versus affiliation or intimacy (McAdams, 1985; McClelland, 1985; Winter, 1973).

According to Blatt, self-definition and relatedness capabilities develop primarily in the context of early interpersonal relationships (Blatt, 1974; Blatt & Blass, 1990, 1996; Blatt, D'Afflitti, & Quinlan, 1992). An adequate balance between the development of relatedness and self-definition contributes to an evolving identity and self-sufficiency that in turn facilitates the establishment of stable interpersonal relationships. However, excessive emphasis on only one of these dimensions has been found to predispose individuals to depression. Thus, Blatt identifies two types of depression that, despite a common set of symptoms, have distinct roots. Overemphasis on

the relatedness dimension—Dependency—is characterized by an excessive preoccupation with the availability of love, nurturance, and support, a heightened need for closeness and interpersonal support, and a vulnerability to feelings of interpersonal loss. Blatt (Blatt, 1974, 1995; Blatt & Shichman, 1983) termed this type of depression *anaclitic depression*. Exaggerated stress on self-definition—Self-Criticism—is associated with harsh standards, heightened strivings for mastery and achievement, a marked need for acknowledgment, and a vulnerability to feelings of failure. Blatt termed this type of depression *introjective depression*. Subsequent formulations, for example, Beck's (1983) model of sociotropic and autonomous types of depression, and Arieti and Bemporad's (1978, 1980) discussion of the dominant other and dominant goal types of depression, are highly congruent with Blatt's (Blatt, 1974, Blatt et al., 1976; Blatt, Quinlan, Chevron, McDonald, & Zuroff, 1982) formulations of two types of personality vulnerabilities to depression. Blatt's concepts of Dependent and Self-Critical depression have been empirically validated using the Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (DEQ), the items of which were chosen to represent common experiences, rather than overt symptoms, of depressed individuals (Blatt et al.). A considerable body of empirical research has demonstrated the relevance of self-criticism and dependency as personality vulnerabilities to depression.

Blatt demonstrates this relevance through several “gateways”. The “entrance” in the introduction presents the intimate life experiences and early childhood memories that led Blatt to discover his core themes. This personal and revealing section is incredibly moving. In the next gate (Part I Chapters 1 and 2), Blatt presents broad theoretical formulations and clinical examples of anaclitic and introjective depression. This section presents the broad theoretical framework and provides the ground for Blatt's formulations. This section presents his complex theory in a lucid, fluent, and user-friendly way, and weaves the theory together with other developmental and personality and cognitive theories, locating Blatt's concepts within psychoanalytic, object relations, and cognitive developmental theoretical perspectives. Thus, Blatt locates his theory within a broad band of various personality theories. This section is supported with ample empirical evidence strengthening Blatt's theoretical formulations, and leads to a very insightful integration of theory, research, and practice.

Part II of the book (Chapters 3 and 4) discusses the measurement of anaclitic and introjective depression and mental representations, establishing links between hypothetical constructs and operational definitions. According to Blatt, anaclitic and introjective experiences of depression differ according to the developmental level of their mental representations. Blatt and colleagues' technique of measuring self and object representations are extensively detailed, demonstrating again the link between Blatt's formulations and (a) their cognitive developmental origins, (b) psychoanalytic, object relations, and (c) empirical investigations.

In the next gate (Part III Chapters 5 through 7), Blatt discusses clinical expressions of anaclitic and introjective depression and their developmental (*distal*) and precipitating (*proximal*) antecedents. An extensive review of results obtained from clinical and non-clinical samples demonstrates the relevance of Blatt's concepts to our understanding of the experiences of depression and the roles played by personality vulnerabilities in different intrapersonal and interpersonal contexts. This section further elaborates on Blatt's roots in developmental theories such as attachment, object relations, and psychoanalytic formulations, as well as the developmental processes that promote “normal” and “vulnerable” personality development. This is followed by a discussion of the role of personality vulnerability in generating vulnerabilities to depression and an evaluation of

the stress–distress model. The identification of distal and proximal antecedents of depression broadens the developmental aspects of Blatt's theoretical formulations and their relevance over the lifecycle. This section again reviews extensive empirical findings that support Blatt's theoretical propositions.

In the final gate (Part IV Chapters 8), Blatt discusses therapeutic implications of his theories for the treatment of depression. Changes in mental representations of self and object in anaclitic and introjective patients as well as optional treatments of depressed patients are detailed. The process of therapeutic change in self-critical and dependent individuals is comprehensively presented. The clinical examples and empirical findings regarding treatment and therapeutic change should inspire practitioners as well as researchers.

*Experiences of Depression* efficiently leads the reader, via a constructive dialectic integration of theory, research, and therapeutic implications, to an understanding of Blatt's integration of psychoanalytic ego psychology with developmental-cognitive theory. This integration characterizes personality development as an interweaving between the development of interpersonal relatedness and self-definition. Blatt's theoretical formulations have inspired increasingly creative research programs around the globe (see Zuroff, Mongrain, & Santor, 2004, for a recent extensive review). Reading this book is amply rewarding because it is a sterling model of integration of theory, research, and practice. It will become essential reading in the field of personality and depression for scholars, researchers, and clinicians alike.

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