The 1977 Division 27 Award for Distinguished Contributions to Community Psychology and Community Mental Health: Bernard L. Bloom

Editor's Note: Bernard L. Bloom was honored at the 1977 annual meeting of the American Psychological Association in San Francisco, California, on August 28, 1977, receiving the Division of Community Psychology Award for Distinguished Contributions to Community Psychology and Community Mental Health. The selection was made by an Awards Committee composed of all the past Presidents of the Division. Dr. Bloom was introduced by Ira Iscoe, of the University of Texas at Austin.
INTRODUCTION

In Honor of Bernard Bloom

I have been associated with Bernie in a variety of activities for at least 10 years. When he called me in the Spring of ’77 to ask me to introduce him at this occasion, I was of course honored. He sent along an up-to-date vita, and its careful perusal impressed me again with the many things Bernie has accomplished and the many areas in which he has worked. I took a fresh look at Bernie’s career and, in a sort of “Cranial Factor Analysis,” reaffirmed my opinion that he was the leader in the introduction of community mental health and public health concepts into clinical psychology. In so doing he has served as a clarifier of issues, pointing to the many complexities and challenges involved in the design, delivery, and evaluation of human services. Another important role has been that of a “reality check,” questioning ideas and concepts that many persons in their enthusiasm were taking too much for granted or accepting without sufficient critical analysis. It is this ability to be constructively critical that characterizes Bernie’s approach to community psychology. He forces us again and again to take new looks at old problems or to recognize that old problems sometimes never go away — they just appear in new forms.

How does one make the transition from classical clinical training to community mental health with an emphasis on prevention and intervention? From whence do the roots of scholarship sprout? Most of us will admit that certain forces have shaped our coming into the field of psychology and its subspecialties. In Bernie’s case the love of scholarship and concern with psychopathology and personality development came early indeed. His parents were definitely not rich. His father worked as a tailor and, although the elder Bloom did not have much of an English education, in the rich tradition of the Russian Jews at the time, he greatly loved and respected learning. In the house was a volume by Sigmund Freud. Bernie’s father held the book in great esteem. Bernie thereby read Freud at an early age and became intrigued with Freudian concepts. He grew up in an atmosphere in which learning and inquiry were valued. He obtained his Bachelors and Masters degrees at Ohio University and his PhD in clinical psychology in 1952 from the University of Connecticut at Storrs.

What happened subsequently is quite unusual in the careers of clinical psychologists. Bernie started out as a clinician but wound up as an academician. From 1952 to 1961 he was for the most part field-based, occupying such positions as Staff Clinical Psychologist in the V.A. Hospital, Boston, and as Director of Psychological Services and Training at Hawaii State Hospital. It was there that he met Gerald Caplan during a consultation visit to the Hawaii Department of Mental Health. Bernie was so taken with Caplan and the Caplanian concepts of