

## Jim Sidanius



Jim Sidanius, John Lindsley Professor of Psychology in memory of William James and of African and African American Studies in the Departments of Psychology and African and African American Studies at Harvard University, has passed away unexpectedly in his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at age 75. A giant among political psychologists, he was a key contributor not only to the field in general, but also to ISPP in particular—serving variously as a vice president of ISPP, a member of the ISPP Governing Council over multiple terms, and as an Editor of the journal *Political Psychology*.

It is difficult to overestimate the scope of Jim's contributions as a scholar. His work, as embodied in over 300 scientific papers and four major books, reshaped our understanding of intergroup relations and political attitudes and behavior in group-stratified societies. He earned his PhD in psychology from the Department of Psychology at the University of Stockholm in 1977 guided by Bo Ekehammar. Jim then held appointments at a number of prestigious institutions, including Carnegie-Mellon University, the University of Texas at Austin, New York University, Princeton University, the University of California, Los Angeles, and finally Harvard University. During his lifetime, he received numerous awards and honors that attest to his stature in the field, including the Society for Personality and Social Psychology's 2013 Career Contribution Award and 2021 APA Distinguished Scientific Contributions Award for the Applications of Psychology. He was also inducted as a Fellow to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2007, and he was a Fellow in both the Association for Psychological Science and the Society for Experimental Social Psychology. Some of his papers won the Gordon Allport Intergroup Relations Prize and the Society for Experimental Social Psychology 2020 Distinguished Scientific Paper Award.

His accomplishments received particular notice in the International Society for Political Psychology (ISPP), which was always his first and foremost home within social science. Most notably, he received ISPP's Harold Lasswell Award for distinguished contribution in the field of political psychology in 2006. In further recognition of his accomplishments as a scholar and a mentor to countless students who have gone on to distinguished careers of their own, ISPP recently renamed its Early Career Achievement Award after him.

Jim contributed to a number of important literatures in social and political psychology over his lifetime, beginning with his work on the nature of political extremism in the 1970s and 1980s. Here, his original *context theory* offered an innovative argument: that political extremists actually showed greater cognitive sophistication than centrists on a number of dimensions, since deviating from "safe" moderate positions requires a greater level of skill in defending one's positions. However, Jim's most important intellectual contribution was *social dominance theory* (SDT). Developed in collaboration with Professor Felicia Pratto of the University of Connecticut, SDT is a general model of how group-based hierarchies are developed, maintained, and reproduced. SDT explicates the personality, ideological, and even biological mechanisms

underlying individual discrimination, institutional discrimination, and argues that power-based asymmetries in group-serving behavior reinforce inequality between groups. Importantly, SDT centers a facet of social life that is more marginal (though not absent) in many other social-psychological perspectives on intergroup relations: group-based power differences. As Jim and his colleagues argued, intergroup conflict is not merely about seeking a positive image for the ingroup or seeking group material interests, as important as these things are; rather, it is in large part about competition for group-based dominance, and the tension between hierarchy-enhancing and hierarchy-attenuating (egalitarian) forces, all of which have deep evolutionary roots.

Among theories of intergroup relations, SDT stands out for the scope of its contribution. It is a truly integrative theory, bringing together multiple levels of analysis and perspectives from a wide variety of disciplines—the psychology of individual differences, communication sciences, organizational behavior, anthropology, political theory, sociology, and evolutionary biology. Moreover, rather than dismissing the insights of other perspectives, it weaves them into a broader multilevel model of intergroup organization, attitudes, and behavior. In this respect, Jim’s most important theoretical contribution helped bring social psychology back to the classical, “big-picture” roots of its founders, and it also helped popularize interest in the evolutionary roots of social behavior among social and political psychologists. SDT is now part of the core “canon” of major theories in the psychological study of intergroup relations, placing it in the same realm as social identity theory and contact theory. In short, Jim’s work is a model of intellectual breadth, courage and integrative imagination that has few peers. It changed the fields of social and political psychology.

Despite his vast record of accomplishment, Jim was always humble and generous with students and colleagues alike. Beloved by his students and postdocs, he was delighted whenever his mentees were able to bring solid empirical evidence on key questions—also, and perhaps especially, when it contradicted his own previous theoretical intuitions (which was not often). Though he expected much of his students, he always did so with deep respect and with complete confidence in their ability to deliver—and he was always ready to provide whatever support his students required along the way. His door was always open, both literally and figuratively. He was one of life’s greats, and endlessly kind.

Jim was beloved by his wife Miriam, his son Che and daughter-in-law Kate, and toddler-aged grandchild. His enormous presence will be missed always, but his influence will live on.

Memorial contributions may be made to ISPP, P.O. Box 1213, Columbus, NC 28722, USA or <https://ispp.org/donate/> or to Doctors without Borders.

If you would like to join a virtual memorial taking place on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> July to mark Jim’s passing and celebrate his life and impact, please click [here](#) to register your interest. (Even if you can’t make it to the event, you can use this link to share memories or reflections that we will compile and circulate to those interested, including Jim’s family and colleagues).

Additional remembrances of Jim by his ISPP friends follow.

*By Christopher Federico*

## **Remembrances of Jim Sidanius from his ISPP friends and colleagues**

*From Christopher Federico:*

Jim's passing is a moment of deep sadness for me, but also of happiness in knowing how many scholars he has influenced and how many lives he has touched as a researcher, teacher, and leader in the field of political psychology. Speaking personally, I am proud to have been Jim's student and research collaborator; he was the most authoritative figure in my life aside from my own parents. My own scholarly accomplishments—though minor in comparison to his—would have not been possible without the skills, guidance, and intellectual scaffolding he provided. In particular, my own idiosyncratic and interdisciplinary approach to the study of politics owes much to his insistent recommendation that his students read well beyond the confines of psychology—a bit of advice that led me to immerse myself in political science, political sociology, and political theory in an effort to broaden my intellectual horizons. I believe that many of the other students he has helped mentor to maturity over the years would offer the same praise. His absence will leave a great void, but his contributions will endure.

*From Nicholas Valentino:*

I was not a student of Jim Sidanius, but he treated me like one anyway, and I will always be grateful to him. In graduate school in the 1990's at UCLA I had the great good fortune to take classes from Jim and to collaborate with his students. His intellectual abilities, and ambitions, were quite stunning to me as a young social scientist. Jim was one of the first scholars I knew personally who was brave enough to attempt to explain not just broad social phenomena in one place at one time, but in all places across time. Interacting with him and his students then and since continues to pay intellectual dividends in many aspects of my own career. It is sometimes difficult to know how lucky one is in the moment to be in such good company, but this was never the case with Jim. This is because he combined deep brilliance with intellectual generosity, offering ideas but also listening to others, teaching but also learning. His was a rare combination of skills in the competitive world of academics. I am deeply saddened by Jim's passing, but very confident that his generous spirit and love of ideas will continue to live and grow in political psychology for generations to come.

*From Felicia Pratto:*

One of Jim Sidanius' gifts was the ability to perceive patterns from the complex information noise of life. His first-hand observations of the similarity of the police and security forces in several countries outside the USs with what he had read about police states, led him to postulate the "laws of law" within social dominance theory. Such an observation stood in sharp contrast to the normative emphasis on the differences between "democratic" and "communist" political systems (and the superiority of the former in all things). He began to deduce social dominance theory's ideological asymmetry hypothesis by observing differences in strengths of correlations between groups in other people's data, differences which often had been unnoted and usually not explained by a paper's authors. He had read deeply and broadly in political psychology when *political psychology* perhaps was not even seen as an entity. At a time when most of his peers worked on "models," and permutations of one or another older theories, Jim was bold enough to set forth an unpopular and controversial new theory. As hard as he worked,

and that was very hard, normally 12 hours a day, he always had a smile or a ribbing for colleagues, and Jim laughed easily. He said, "I always tried to get the science right." and I never saw him exasperated or disappointed or chagrined (except when I disagreed with him). He loved the work. And he really believed in ISPP, because he felt that people won't develop broad enough understandings of human beings if they only understand their own societies. He is too big a person to begin to imagine being gone. He must still be writing, "In addition, and also, other things being equal ...."

*From Marilyn Brewer:*

When Jim Sidanius joined the social psychology faculty at UCLA it proved to be a life-changing experience for me. With our shared interests in intergroup relations and political psychology, we quickly became close colleagues, friends, and intellectual sparring partners. Jim challenged me like no one else ever had to think outside my disciplinary boxes. Our ongoing debates about the relative importance of identity motives and power motives shaped my own theorizing and future research. But more than that--Jim profoundly altered my understanding of the social world. He was a man of strong opinions and bold theorizing, but he always let the data speak. The extent of Jim's contributions to social theory and the development of political psychology will be well documented and celebrated in these and other tributes to his legacy as a scientist, teacher, and mentor. But for me, his legacy is much more personal. Knowing Jim Sidanius made me a different person, as a scholar and as a citizen of the world. I will miss him greatly but will always be grateful for having fallen into his sphere of influence.

*From Colette Van Laar:*

It is with terrible sadness that I mourn the passing of Jim Sidanius, a truly remarkable scientist and human being. It is very difficult to express the profound impact Jim had on my forming as a scholar, and as a scientist practitioner in the world. Jim was one of my mentors at UCLA, and he, Shana Levin and I spent an intensive year together at the Russell Sage Foundation in New York working on our UCLA longitudinal contact project. Jim challenged us to the best, let us get away with nothing, asked us the most difficult questions in his truly amazing statistical classes using the Socratic method. He bet us pennies over outcomes of studies, laughed when he was wrong. There is not a day that passes that he or something I learned from him is not in my thoughts. He taught us about ways of approaching science, dared us to ask difficult and unpopular questions, and to not shy away from answers that may not fit the current thinking. In the midst of all of that he was the gentle giant, such a warm and kind human being, continued to mentor us long after we had left UCLA. My office was next to his at UCLA and in the evenings he would sit between his piles of papers (he would always say if your office is tidy you are not working hard enough), in his clogs, speaking Swedish on the phone; we would talk about his other great loves in addition to science: music and photography. He supported, encouraged, believed in us, made us laugh. He will be profoundly missed, but leaves behind all of those wonderful things for us to pass on. And what a legacy that is.

*From Héctor Carvacho:*

Jim was a global thinker and a global worker. His impact goes well beyond the domains of Western social psychology, and his figure was perceived with hope and admiration by those

fighting inequality from academia in the Global South. His collaborators and friends can be found all around the world, which allowed me--an undergrad RA working in Santiago in the mid-2000s--to meet him. Since then he mentored and supported me in the most relevant steps in my career. When he invited me to join his lab as postdoc I felt so lucky and undeserving, but his support and kindness helped me to have a wonderful experience. His lab was a protected space for a very diverse group of brilliant young minds to grow under his guidance. In the overwhelming whiteness of Western academia, he showed me how to see my place in the world, as Latino, Chilean, and first gen, as strengths and motives of pride, not as shortcomings. He valued my ideas despite my broken English, he saw my potential--way earlier than I did myself--not my credentials. He encouraged me to be a better version of myself, as a researcher, father, and member of my community. He helped me to prioritize, to see the larger picture, and to choose my fights. He guided my chaotic enthusiasm and challenged my ideas, with his calm voice and contagious smile. I'm forever in debt for his generosity. It is however our friendship that I will miss the most. His competitive spirit in our weekly chess games, the long conversations, and his love for my family. The image of Jim on his knees playing with Legos with my 3-year-old daughter will stay as my fondest memory.

*From Lotte Thomsen:*

Jim Sidanius was a model of how to live for truth and the greater common good. The brilliance, courage, depth, and breath-taking scope and impact of his work speaks for itself, but Jim did this work being selflessly generous to all around him. Jim changed my life and the way I think about life, the subject we study. I became Jim's student not by design or luck, but by his supreme kindness alone, a kindness which he shone upon all his students. I was a bewildered, international one-year exchange student without any advisor at UCLA when Jim just walked up to me at a departmental colloquium, introduced himself, and asked if I didn't want to get some research done while I was there—a possibility that had not even occurred to me—without any knowledge of my interests or skills, simply to help. Next day, I left his office with his keen collaboration for a project that was not remotely related to his own research agenda, but this didn't keep him from devoting considerable time and resources to it. Next semester, he simply informed me that he had enrolled me in his advanced, mind-opening statistics class, although I had taken no statistics before UCLA, and then he patiently tutored me, and anyone else, for extra hours on end to make sure I would catch up from scratch (Jim believed you haven't understood any statistical technique unless you can calculate it by hand or using matrix algebra). He brought me with him as his student at Harvard, and continued to care for me, my family, and my ideas throughout my life. He was genuinely interested in people's points of view, no matter their background, personality and orientation, always open-minded and non-judgmental, but willing to take the trouble of letting you know if and why he thought you were mistaken. He didn't look for what students could help him do, but for how he could help bring their ideas to fruition. He was a clear-eyed judge of people's character and motives, but still he was unfailingly generous, understanding and forgiving to people around him. He was also very funny. Jim worked so hard, with burning urgency, but when I became ill he told me to drop everything and focus only on getting well. Nevertheless, he would edit our student papers from his own hospital bed in critical care. No question was too controversial to ask with Jim, no topic too difficult to study or discuss, no idea too far-fetched or ambitious, no scientific facts too uncomfortable to be known. He delighted in intellectual combat, but was completely non-defensive, and the smitting joy of science and sheer exuberance in his face was even greater if you could (rarely) prove him wrong.

Every time we make an exciting finding, I think what will Jim think of this. In the same way as you will always be your parents' child, I think you will always be Jim's student, and I will mourn his loss every remaining step of my way.

*From Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington:*

Losing Jim is losing a father-figure, in more than one way. First, because there are few other people from his generation who have had a more profound impact on my life. I discovered social dominance theory when I first heard Jim speak, giving a keynote at ISPP in Paris in 2009, and at that moment I decided I had no choice but to leave my job and my home and move to the US to study with him. The uprooting was more like a rebirth, as this theory and Jim's approach to studying inequality has shaped the way I see the world, as a psychologist and as a human, ever since. Jim's work is unparalleled in its combination of an unflinching examination of the way social systems are strewn with hierarchy motives and human minds are shaped by societal dynamics, with an empirical rigour that equips scholars both to dig deeper into human nature and to speak truth to power in a way that cannot be ignored. Second, Jim feels like a father because of how he cared deeply for me as for all of his students, and, as many have said, took us seriously. Despite his incredible work ethic and ability to drive forward the fields of psychology, political science, and African American studies, he never got too caught up in it to be there for anyone who needed him, to sit and enjoy a laugh with us, and to give us sound advice on what mattered in life. As we reflect as a field and as a community on his work and life, Jim's legacy will only grow; his spirit will certainly never leave my work.

*From Nour Kteily:*

It is hard to overestimate the impact Jim had on me, and so evidently on the lives and thinking of so many others. I came to Jim's lab as someone who was skeptical that there was a place for someone like me in social psychology. Although I'd enjoyed my undergraduate classes in psychology, none of the theories or perspectives that I learned really seemed to grapple with anything I'd experienced growing up as an Arab in the Middle East. It seemed almost like psychologists were allergic to talking about intergroup power; about systems of domination by which groups at the top exploited and took advantage of groups at the bottom. So coming across Jim's work as I was looking at graduate programs felt like a breath of fresh air. I was lucky enough that Jim chose me to join his lab—I have a theory that he had a sixth sense for scrappy outsiders, maybe recognizing a little of himself in them—and I couldn't feel more grateful that he did. Jim modeled the very best of what social psychologists could be: thinking broadly, reading widely, letting the data speak, and working hard, but always doing so with humility, kindness, and empathy. Jim always saw the best in others, and drove them to realize their full potential. His door was always open, and he took the time to get to know us not just as useful cogs in a lab machine but as human beings first and foremost. Despite his towering status in the field, he always treated us as equal peers: he was just as eager to learn from us as we were from him. At the end of my first year in graduate school, I was ready to call it quits. None of my studies were "working," I didn't know most of the classic papers that people rattled off as common knowledge, and I wasn't sure I could hack it. When I told Jim, he sat me down, reminded me that he believed in me, and told me that one day I'd look back on this moment and laugh about it. Without ever making me feel like he was doing me a favor, he quietly brought me in to lead a project that I'm sure he could have easily done on his own, and when the associated

paper was published, celebrated my first publication with me as if it were his first. I wish I could look back and laugh at that time together with him again. His loss leaves a massive hole behind for the field of social psychology, and for each of us who were fortunate enough to have been touched by his wisdom and grace. I will miss him very dearly.

*From Eva G.T. Green & Christian Staerklé:*

Jim's passing leaves us unbearably sad and empty. Our paths crossed Jim's for the first time at UCLA where we were postdocs for two years in 2002-2004. We have many fond memories from our stay, including legendary intergroup lab meetings, Jim's pep talks to us postdocs, intense discussions about research ideas and results, happily crammed in his office. From Jim we learned to ask the "big" questions, know our data, and read beyond social psychology. Jim also made sure ISPP became our academic home. He treated us as equals and listened to our ideas, but also gave direct and honest feedback. Thinking back, this guidance has remained with us ever since. Jim was an extraordinarily caring and generous mentor, and always also interested in our lives outside academia. After our escapade to LA, we met mainly at ISPP, the last time in Edinburgh. Some years earlier, we invited Jim and Felicia to teach a workshop in our social psychology graduate programme of the Universities of Lausanne and Geneva to share with our students the experience of energizing academic debate. Students and faculty alike were delighted after this visit. Us being (at least partially) Finns, we also had an interesting Scandi connection with Jim, teasing him about his Swedishness and sharing our enthusiasm for the cold rosehip "soup", nyponsoppa. Jim had a brilliant mind and an immense heart. We will never forget the warmth and kindness of Jim's deep laughter. We miss you, Jim.

*From Yuen Huo:*

I was fortunate to have had Jim as a senior colleague when I joined the faculty of UCLA's Psychology Department at UCLA fresh out of graduate school. At the time, his theory of social dominance with Felicia Pratto was gaining influence rapidly across multiple fields. For those just starting out, someone with Jim's piercing intellect, expansive knowledge, and professional stature would be intimidating. He was. But he was also someone who cared deeply not only about the work but about the people doing the work, especially his students and early career scholars. He opened his office door and his home to us. Together, Jim, David Sears, Curtis Hardin, and I started the Intergroup Relations Lab at UCLA which has for more than 20 years served as an intellectual home and research incubator to many social and political psychologists in training. During those lab meetings, Jim listened to our ideas – some more promising than others. He asked incisive questions that cut to the core of limitations in our thinking that we had not seen or did not want to see. His comments inevitably sharpened our ideas or prompted us to drop less worthy projects to pursue more promising ones. In true form, he did not act to maintain the hierarchy between senior scholars and those waiting in the wings. He treated us as equals and respected our autonomy and our work even if he did not always agree with our assumptions. Although Jim did not say it in so many words, we knew he was rooting for us. He motivated us to become better scholars capable of the rigorous scholarship that defined his career. He will be remembered as an original and influential thinker and highly productive researcher. But for many of us, he was Jim – friend and mentor. He will be deeply missed.

*From Arnold Ho:*

Jim Sidanius profoundly shaped my mind, and my life. A decade out from my PhD, all of my thinking about intergroup relations continues to find its roots in Jim's field-defining work. For example, my recent theoretical work with Nour Kteily and Jackie Chen—on how sociopolitical motives, intergroup threats, and intergroup status differences combine to influence racial categorization and other intergroup phenomena—can find its intellectual roots in pioneering work done by Jim and my academic siblings (Lotte Thomsen and others) while I was in graduate school. Moreover, I would not be where I am today, working with my own graduate students to carry Jim's legacy forward, if it were not for Jim's immensely kind and endless support, both professional and personal. Though I was ill-prepared for graduate school compared to my first-year cohort mates at UCLA—I recall my panic as I struggled to interpret a simple interaction effect during my first-year research methods class with Paul Davies and Yuen Huo—Jim took me under his wings, inviting me to work on projects with him from day 1. Jim listened patiently as I rambled on in his office that first year, and after I transferred to Harvard to continue working with Jim, he endured thousands of additional hours of my half-baked thoughts with characteristic good humor and endless patience (I'm grateful to Miriam as well for putting up with my making Jim late for dinner on countless evenings!). Beyond academic advising, Jim was there for many of my personal ups and downs too. Jim provided me with comfort and perspective (and much-needed comic relief with good-natured teasing) when a long-term relationship I had in graduate school ended. He was by my side, along with my parents, on my graduation day. My parents, who were refugees from Mao's Cultural Revolution, and did not have an opportunity to attend college themselves, never imagined that their son would receive a Ph.D. from Harvard; they are endlessly grateful to Jim, too. I will never forget everything that Jim did for me. Jim's legacy will live on not only through his truly game-changing intellectual contributions, but also through the generations of academic progeny he nurtured to maturity.

*From Sasha Y. Kimel:*

Jim warmly welcomed me, providing me with an atmosphere of care and support despite coming into the lab with few connections to his work and largely by happenstance. Just out of a PhD program, I required a social psychology lab placement as part of my Harvard College Fellowship. Even with little knowledge of intergroup relations or political psychology, Jim unhesitatingly accepted me and continued to let me stay long after my fellowship ended. For each of the five years that I was part of Jim's lab, I kept applying, interviewing and waiting for a tenure-track job I was excited about. During that time, I struggled with feelings of failure and rejection and became very consumed in my job-search efforts, often to the detriment of my research projects with Jim. I always worried that I was letting Jim down and that he would tell me that I needed to move on, that he could no longer expend his limited space and resources on me. But, Jim never turned me away and never stopped supporting me. Even when I made a huge and embarrassing error at his expense, he still did not turn his back on me. Instead, he listened with understanding as I cried in his office and then consoled me with wise advice. When I finally got the job I wanted, he celebrated it--like everyone else's achievements--with an expensive dinner out with the entire lab group (often around 15 of us). I am still in the process of publishing several papers with Jim and I am so sad that he will not be here to celebrate them with me.

*From James H. Liu:*



I began my PhD journey in 1987 at UCLA, a naïve kid interested in social cognition, after having completed a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science and having worked for 3 years as a computer programmer. I was most fortunate that Jim Sidanius joined the faculty at UCLA in 1988, and became one of my PhD supervisors. Big Jim was not just a breath, but a tsunami of fresh air: UCLA was always a good program, but I don't recall it being very ethnically diverse at the time. Jim would stroll up in his clogs, chatter in Swedish on the phone with his son Che, and talk about American oligarchy as represented by the DemocraticRepublicanParty (without a breath of air between those three words). I remember being an undergraduate teaching assistant for Jim as he lectured, and we learned that George Washington had been elected (virtually unanimously), but with the vote of only 2% of the adults in the 13 original colonies (everyone else was colored, female, or property-less). Jim was really good at opening people's eyes, and I left social cognition eyes wide open. His combination of fact-based provocation, his skill at theorizing and using statistics to tell tales, together with his commitment to arguing dispassionately with his students (and colleagues) about the most controversial topics made him a subject of awe and wonder. I admired his ability to shrug off the most trenchant critiques of Social Dominance Theory (one anonymous reviewer in 1991 said it was a tautology, and that was the most polite part of a 5-page review consigning us to the rubbish bin of history). But more than that, we students learned of his history, and wondered what his real name was before he was exiled from the US to the Middle East, and then got political asylum in Sweden (Chris Federico might tell you if you ply him with enough alcohol). Big Jim was, in kiwi parlance, a legend. I wish I could be as dispassionate as Jim, and listen as well as he did (but maybe not so much without it making an iota of difference to his opinions/beliefs). From him and Marilyn Brewer I learned that you can be passionate about your theories, but completely open to arguing about them, and seeking evidence for them. Such a spirit will sorely and surely be missed.

*From Leonie Huddy:*

It is difficult to believe that Jim is gone. He was a true force of nature. An unstoppable intellectual giant with a heart of gold, a razor-sharp mind, insatiable curiosity about the social world, and a voice as resonant as it was mellifluous. His charm was irresistible. We met when I was a graduate student and struck up a friendship that was characterized by surprisingly frank, impressively egalitarian, and endlessly argumentative conversations that we continued for decades. I recall many late evenings arguing back and forth about gender relations, human nature, and notions of human progress. Jim was the perfect interlocutor. He never failed to sharpen my thoughts (and those of many others), argued hard to see where his arguments led, and never took such discussions personally. I especially admired his ability to integrate his personal and intellectual life, traversing diverse terrains he wove together insights from his beloved Sweden with omnivorous readings in psychology, politics, anthropology, criminology, history, and biology. Jim is no longer with us but his intellectual legacy is guaranteed, and his work will have resonance for many years to come. I also hope we can preserve his spirit by being a little kinder, more thoughtful, clear-sighted, and passionate as we go about our everyday tasks.

*From Milan Obaidi & Jonas R. Kunst:*

When we both arrived at different times in Jim's lab, we landed in a world that was unknown to us and that could be overwhelming at times. Already as students in Scandinavia, we were aware of Jim's brilliance, accomplishments and contributions to the field, which

made meeting him even more intimidating. But from the very first time we met, he welcomed us warmly and made us feel appreciated as members of his lab. Although he was one of the leading scholars in our field, he was always approachable and humble. As a mentor, Jim saw potential in people when they didn't see it themselves. Importantly, he was genuinely enthusiastic for, and interested in, supporting our research ideas, even though they were not always closely related to his own work and research program. His theoretical and critical input and perspectives made and continue to make a big impact on our work until today. Jim was very generous with his intellectual mentorship, and his door was literally always open to us. He also had great (dry) sense of humour. Our meetings were academically highly stimulating but also light hearted because of Jim's ability to make us laugh. Each meeting started with Swedish as the main language of command and then gradually transitioned to English. Speaking to Jim's work ethos, even when we left our offices on Saturday evenings, he would say goodbye to us followed by "Well, I'll see you tomorrow morning then." He was the first person to come to the office and the last to leave, but during our stay we humorously tried to compete with him. Jim also set a standard in terms of inclusion and diversity. There was room for every background and academic perspective in his lab, which made everyone feel welcomed and at home, even if they came from very remote parts of the world. Jim's groundbreaking contributions to the social sciences speak for themselves and will live on. We feel privileged and grateful to have been among those who were able to work with and learn from him, and could get to know him as a person. He will be missed.

*From Shana Levin:*

Jim was a huge presence in my life. He was my PhD advisor at UCLA, mentor, teacher, collaborator, and dear friend. It's hard to capture the impact he had on my life because there were so many intersections. During my first year at UCLA, I went into his office to ask him how to run SPSS and he came back to my office with the telephone book of an SPSS manual and told me to let him know if I had any questions. He taught the hardest advanced stats class of the department but taught it in such an accessible way that we actually deeply learned the material. Teaching and mentoring seemed to come so naturally to him. His Socratic method was terrifying, but at the same time he was incredibly supportive. "Shana, I know you know this, so I am just going to remind you," he would often say. Collaborating with Jim was an around-the-clock proposition. I spent my third year of grad school in Israel and he came for a conference at the end of the year. We stayed up almost all night analyzing data. I have never learned so much while having so much fun across so many years with another human being. He danced with me at my wedding. He and Miriam watched my kids grow up. I visited them in Boston and they visited me in LA. We celebrated Jim's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday in the lab at UCLA and toasted his 75<sup>th</sup> over a long-distance phone call. For over twenty-five years, he has been with me in my brain, my thoughts, and my heart. I miss him terribly but he will be with me always.

*From Roberto González:*

I had the privilege of meeting Jim back in 1994 when I attended ISPP's annual conference for the first time in my life. What a great way to kick off my academic career! It was impressive to meet him, a jovial man, with an unmistakable smile, close and sharp. His intellectual legacy is immense. There is no doubt that his ideas have nurtured the reflection about the role that power, and hierarchies play in human relationships at the individual and collective level. Jim has been

extraordinarily influential in the development of social and political psychology in Latin America and particularly in Chile, from where I write. With great generosity, he visited us in Chile on repeated occasions, stimulating the academic careers of many young researchers and the development of political psychology in this region of the world. He visited us in historical moments of our academic development such as the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the School of Psychology of the Pontifical Universidad Católica de Chile, the summer school of the Center for Intercultural and Indigenous research (CIIR) or the inauguration of the Center for Conflict and Social Cohesion Studies (COES), where he gave a fantastic Keynote talk of his most recent works on social dominance in the presence of the President of the Republic, Mrs. Michele Bachelet, and a diverse academic audience. I would like to highlight his simplicity and closeness with our graduate students, colleagues, and especially young researchers, who saw him as an intellectual mentor. Jim has left an indelible mark on all of us, on our history and without a doubt, we owe him a lot in Chile. We held countless conversations that helped broaden my perspective on human nature. Jim's ability to establish bridges and networks was infinite. I am sure that like us, many academic communities had the opportunity to grow with him. One of the greatest social and political psychologists has departed. Fortunately, your legacy will be transmitted from one generation to another through the many disciples who grew up with you. Jim, we will always remember you.

*From David O. Sears:*

Jim was a highly esteemed colleague of mine at UCLA in the Psychology Department from 1988 to 2006. I'll focus on a few aspects of that career that may not be familiar to some readers. He was a core founding member of our team-taught Proseminar in Political Psychology offered annually from 1989 throughout his tenure at UCLA, along with Professors Peter Loewenberg (History), Lawrence Bobo (Sociology), John Zaller and Shanto Iyengar and Deborah Larson (all Political Science), and me. In 1991, we offered a team-taught graduate course in American Racism along with Marilyn Brewer, Larry Bobo, and Frank Gilliam, to an audience of over 30 graduate students and a faculty colleague. He also was instrumental in developing our weekly Intergroup Relations Lab (IRL), engaging in his favorite indoor sport, which was arguing until the cows came home, as fellow participants Curtis Hardin, Yuen Huo, and Christia Brown can attest. The IRL continues to this day. But as a colleague he was not a prima donna, insisting on teaching only in his specialty. He taught undergraduate statistics, served as area chair, and served in undergraduate admissions for the campus as a whole.

Jim was a genuine intellectual in a way that few academics are today, well and widely-read, with great curiosity. He was a man of great integrity and not always predictable preferences. Though a passionate supporter of black liberation movements, he was unwilling to make easy but ultimately, he thought, self-defeating concessions in professional standards, such as in affirmative action cases. He was also wont to say that he preferred conservative Republicans to white liberals because at least he knew where Republicans were coming from. He was a wonderful colleague for me. Although we had great differences in our thinking about intergroup relations, we collaborated in an edited book on American racism, in addition to the afore-mentioned joint teaching. He was also a dear friend. Even after he left UCLA, I treasured our annual dinners together at the ISPP meetings. Jim was a foodie and I always counted on him to have scouted out the best of restaurants, whether in Berlin or Edinburgh or Boston. His death is a terrible loss to all of us.

*From Sa-Kiera TJ Hudson:*

Jim's research was the perfect blend of what I wanted to do in graduate school. I wanted to study social identities as social hierarchies in an intersectional way, and I found SDT (and the theory of gendered prejudice; TGP) as perfect theories under which to research my ideas. Of course, once I learned more about SDT and TGP I had all the questions, mostly because I disagreed with certain premises and the ways these theories would apply to intersectional targets. With any other advisor, having a first year say she disagrees with your thinking that you've honed for as long as she's been alive would have been a big "excuse you?!?" moment. But I didn't have that advisor. I had Jim, who listened carefully to my thoughts, laughed, and told me "it's an empirical question." That set the stage for six years with Jim, a relationship filled with love and support and a ton of debating. Jim treated me as an intellectual equal and had no problems pointing out the holes in my argument with his ridiculously vast psychological, anthropological, sociological, and political knowledge. He made all of my research better because I was constantly trying to get to a Jim-level argument, and it felt like I was getting my PhD surrounded by family. My time with Jim was filled with small warm moments, moments that reminded me that no matter how long I took on my research and no matter what the data said, Jim was proud of me for me. And that has been priceless. As I write up my last dissertation paper I am hearing Jim's voice in my head around what he would think about this argument I'm making, or that argument and I miss him even more so. But I am so thankful I got to spend the time I did with him and that he taught me as much as he did. So much so that even though he is gone, I can still debate my advisor in my head. Rest in power Jim!

*From Jorge Vala, Ana Filipa Madeira, Cícero Pereira, Mariana Miranda & Rui Costa Lopes:*

It was with shock and profound sadness that we heard of the news of Jim Sidanius' passing and we want to share with you (Felicia) our feelings about a man we admire. Our acquaintance with Jim was made mostly through the readings of his work (together with you) towards a social psychology of intergroup relations attentive to social inequalities and concerned with the construction of more just societies. These are the concerns we find in Jim's work but also on all the work that emerged from it and which has inspired and stimulated our own research on the processes of legitimation/de-legitimation on several domains of social life, such as discrimination and its justification, the socially critical decision making processes or racism and stereotypes about minority groups. And for that we are deeply grateful to him. Jim's departure is a profound loss for social psychology and strongly so for the social psychologists working here at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon. But we know that his work and his example will stand. As our Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa would say, Jim's contribution was "plural like the Universe."

*From Asma Ghani:*

Five years ago, Jim welcomed me to his lab, changing the course of my life and my career trajectory. Coming from Pakistan, I was an inexperienced researcher and Jim patiently guided me through the intensity of the scientific process. He repeatedly reminded me to not be afraid of the data - 'failed' experiments were a part of the process and they did not determine my worth as a scholar. Jim was always available for his students and even though he suffered from poor health for much of last year, he always found time for me and directed several resources my

way to help me with my research. As the last Sidanius student, I feel immensely privileged and proud that I got the chance to know Jim and, at the same time, I am completely heartbroken that Jim will not get to see me graduate. However, he is with me while I work on my dissertation as I am still having conversations with him in my head. Jim's work on the Theory of Gendered Prejudice is brilliant (and controversial!) and as I tackle aspects of that in my research, I will deeply miss his excitement, his intellect, and his vast knowledge on the subject. Rest in power, Jim.

*From Serge Guimond:*

Jim was a friend. In 1999, I read the book, *Social Dominance Theory*, and I was amazed. I wrote to him, as a colleague, to tell him so. We finally met for the first time in person, at ISPP of course, in Berlin in July 2002. I wanted to introduce him to my graduate student who was completing her thesis on dogmatism. This was the start of a wonderful relationship. I remember him telling me that he defined himself first and foremost as a political psychologist. In 2004, Kate Reynolds and John Turner organized the "Dynamics of social change" meeting in Canberra. They invited 25 social psychologists, most of them Social Identity theorists. Jim was invited to join -this was not easy turf for him- and, true to his character, he came. In 2008, as ISPP was in Paris that year I took the opportunity to invite Jim to visit Clermont-Ferrand. With several other colleagues and students, we worked together very hard and had a lot of fun. The result several years later was a publication that won the Gordon Allport Intergroup Relations Prize. Jim had a brilliant mind. But most importantly he always acted in a way that made people feel accepted and important. Thank you Jim, my friend.

*From Larry Bobo:*

Jim Sidanius and I met back in 1989 when I was considering leaving the University of Wisconsin to move to UCLA. We bonded over substantially overlapping views of the dynamics of ethnoracial attitudes and relations as well as the astonishing mess that was his office at the time, much like my own. When I arrived at UCLA we started meeting almost daily for coffee and arguing incessantly about social dominance theory versus group position/status threat approaches and especially over whether meaningful change and improvement in race relations was even possible. We collaborated in the end on three papers together and co-organized a conference with David Sears that resulted in an important edited volume. Our friendship had its ups and downs over years but endured particularly after we undertook a 3 day drive together from Santiago de Compostela to Madrid and then hung-out in Madrid for two days following an ISPP meeting.

As others have commented Jim had a brilliant and rigorous mind. He took ideas and scholarship with the utmost seriousness. His theory of Social Dominance, almost from the first time I heard him discuss it, I recognized as a significant insight. As I read his work and collaborated with him the power of his only became more evident. Jim was indefatigable. There was also a certain daring to his intellect. He was remarkably humble, carrying himself without the sort of hubris one associates with many highly accomplished academics (though I did quickly learn to never follow him on a panel because he had no sense of time and LOVED talking about SDT so much he couldn't be hemmed in).

Jim had a great sense of humor. At the ISPP conference in Santiago de Compostela we went to the group dinner at a large seafood restaurant. They provided a mixed boil containing several different fish, mussels, shrimp, scallops, etc. But there was also something on the tray that looked kind of like rugged, hardened knuckles. I asked Jim if he was going to try one. He rather dryly said: "I don't eat Klingon food!" We found out later they were barnacles. He was a good man in many, many ways, though recognizable as what we would call "an old school brother." He loved powerful cars, demanded exceptional quality in his stereophonic equipment, enjoyed the natural beauty of the harshness of Death Valley, and relished in a capacity to gaze, as he would say, "into the belly of the beast," or the darker side of human nature. He was a dear friend. He will be remembered as an important scholar. And above all, by those who knew him, as a truly solid guy. I miss him enormously.

*From Robin Bergh:*

When I first came to visit Jim's lab, I thought I already knew a lot about him. Not just from his published work, but also based on numerous anecdotes from his old friend and my PhD supervisor, Bo Ekehammar. Jim had a legendary status in political psychology, and I was nervous to meet him. As it turned out, Jim told me he was nervous too – about how his Swedish would measure up after so many years back in the U.S. (It was flawless, still.) So I had the first lesson of knowing Jim: The most remarkable thing about him was not his intellect, but the humble and relatable personality he carried it with. Of course, I'm not the only one who would say that, nor the only one who felt a special connection to Jim.

To most people, there is a quality versus quantity trade-off with things in life, but that was not the case with Jim. In his work, he produced a lot of research of the highest quality. The not-so-secret key was the endless hours he put in. In interpersonal relations, however, I don't think time was the key. So how could he forge so many close connections with people, while working nonstop? Behind his humility, warmth, and intellect I think the answer is that Jim could relate to a lot of different people, he would always strike the right chords, and he would show he genuinely cared. He was not a master of small-talk; he was a master of turning those conversations into genuine human connections. Jim's ease to go beyond the trivial to the profoundly human made him a unique researcher, mentor, and friend. It will make us miss him all the more, but it will also be an inspiration for future generations trying to walk in his footsteps.

*From PJ Henry:*

Where to start. Imagine a wide-eyed kid from Wisconsin who never met a Black man in a position of authority and who thought anyone could be anything they wanted as long as they really, really tried. That's when I met Jim Sidanius in grad school at UCLA in the mid-90s, and needless to say it was an awkward beginning. I might have completely missed the opportunity to work with him had I not landed my first job as an assistant professor at the American University of Beirut, where I fast realized that none of my training in social psychology made sense in Lebanon, except of course for social dominance theory. I nervously wrote to Jim asking if he'd be interested in working with me, and he immediately and eagerly agreed, starting a collaboration with him, Felicia, and Shana that transformed how I saw the social world. Once I could see the social *structure* of racism, saw its machinery and not just its manifestation in

attitudes, I couldn't unsee it. I try to channel Jim in every course I teach, every conversation I have about racism, classism, inequality, intersectionality, construct validity, you name it. Thanks, Jim, I will always be grateful.

*From Joshua Rabinowitz:*

I think I had a fairly unique experience with Jim Sidanius: I worked with him as both an undergraduate and a graduate student—he taught the first political psychology course I ever took, he shepherded my first publication through the writing and editorial processes, he was my main adviser as a graduate student, he taught the most intimidating statistics class I ever took, he was the lead instructor for one of the first courses I taught as an assistant, and he hooded me when I completed the doctorate. There was no one in my 10 years at UCLA—or indeed, in my entire life—who loomed larger in my academic and professional development than Jim.

As I have been reflecting on his amazing life, what has been striking me has been less the grand arc of his outstanding scholarship and, rather, little moments with him, some funny and some less so. I will share just a couple remembrances. When Jim and a contingent of his white graduate students (including me) were returning from ISPP in Vancouver, he was “randomly chosen” among the whole lot of us to have his bags searched at U.S. Customs. We students must have expressed horror on our faces. But Jim, in the subsequent, pregnant microsecond flashed a wry smile as if to say, “See..? This is what I’ve been talking about.” On other occasions, though, I remember Jim’s glee. A common occurrence was that he, after spending hours processing data and testing models in LISREL, would bounce through David Sears’s door with results in hand and ask, “How do you explain this, David?!” In addition to his intellectual brilliance, Jim’s ability to exude gravitas *and* humor was unparalleled in my experience. I will miss Jim terribly.

*From Jorge Manzi:*

Jim arrived to UCLA when I was a graduate student. From the very beginning, he was a distinctive, passionate and powerful figure in the social psychology department. I did not work directly with him at the time, but I was very fortunate to be a member of the political psychology group that David Sears, Marilynn Brewer and other faculty members had established before his arrival. Jim joined the group at a time when he was developing Social Dominance Theory. I was very fortunate to have been a witness of his unusual but rigorous approach to building new ideas, drawing from different traditions in social psychology and other disciplines, while being very aware about the different contexts where those ideas had to be tested. He was a global citizen, truly interested in ideas that could apply to diverse contexts around the world. It was always stimulating and challenging talking with him. He was a bold and surprising thinker, open to new ideas, and willing to go beyond the established boundaries of social psychology. His intellectual and personal legacy has been immense, as we can all see in these pages. He made a difference to the people he worked with, and made a difference to our discipline. You will be missed dear Jim.

*From Brian Lowery:*

There are so many things to say about Jim, but two things stand out from graduate school experience. The first was the fear he inspired. To be in Jim's lab was to be tested...constantly. I remember being terrified during lab meetings my first year. These were not affairs where people gingerly gave the nicest possible feedback. Oh no, you had better be prepared because at any moment you could be called out and challenged on an idea or your statistics. The fear wasn't limited to lab meetings. As many will note, Jim taught the hardest stats course in the Psych department. I saw more than a few tears shed during exams. Some students would ask me what it was like to be in Jim's lab or to work with him, wondering how I, or any other student, kept from falling over in his presence. As a young Black scholar, I loved that Jim evoked those responses. Even when I was intimidated, I understood what it meant that this Black man's intellect demanded respect. You either learned to appreciate the brightness of his presence and the demands he made of you, or you avoided him. I felt sorry for those that avoided him.

The second thing I remember about Jim, was his generosity of spirit. Over my time at UCLA, the most comfortable interactions with Jim became the arguments. I loved them because he was willing to seriously engage with me, a lowly grad student. He wasn't always warm and cuddly, although he could be, but he always cared about those around him. He pushed everyone to be the best version of themselves. He never pushed anyone callously, he never belittled, it was always clear that his pushing came from a belief in what you were capable of. He didn't give up easily on anyone, and more importantly, he didn't make it easy for anyone to give up on themselves.

*From John T. Jost:*

Social psychology has never seen anyone like Jim Sidanius and may never see anyone like him again. As a teenager in New York City he was beaten brutally by police officers for the "crime" of being a young black male hanging out with a white girl in the early 1960s. No doubt such experiences contributed to his youthful radicalism. When his friends began turning up dead, Jim left the US and travelled extensively. He was searching for an egalitarian paradise and never found it, even in Sweden. What he found, instead, was social science, and he became one of its very best practitioners for the next forty years.

I consider myself extremely lucky to have become friends with Jim, first in California and later on the East Coast. To me he was an ideal senior colleague, a mentor from a distance, someone who took an early interest in me and my work, kept tabs on me, supported my career, and influenced my thinking immensely. We published a book together on *Political Psychology* and a few articles, too, but mainly I remember how much fun it was to argue with him, how warm and sincere he was, and how contagious and all-encompassing was his smile. We commiserated about the anxiety of public speaking, from which we both suffered. We laughed at the extreme, overwrought dismissiveness of some of our worst critics. I loved Jim Sidanius, even when I disagreed with him about, say, the origins of gender differences or the inevitability of group-based hegemony or the immutability of human nature. There was a profound, hard-earned, ineradicable pessimism in his thinking about society that I could never quite square with his enthusiastic, upbeat, optimistic personality. Jim was a role model in so many different ways: he saw social science as an urgent undertaking, a way of making the world a better place; he took ideas seriously and treated people with respect and dignity even in the heat of scholarly battle; he



valued empirical evidence above all else, although I am not sure it really changed his mind on major questions; and he relentlessly pushed himself and others to excel. I will miss him deeply.

*From Bo Ekehammar:*

### FAREWELL JIM, MY OLD FRIEND

We met for the first time in the middle of the 1970s when you had been admitted to the PhD programme in psychology at Stockholm University. I was already in this programme for 2 years and we were all very excited to have a new student coming from abroad. That was not very common at that time and that you came from the USA made it even more interesting. You appeared to be a warm and open-minded person with a sharp intellect and high integrity. And people liked you from the start. And we became friends more or less immediately.

You arrived as James Brown but everyone called you just Jim directly. You were interested in the research that everyone in the group did and we got very interested in your research. You spent a lot of time in the Royal Library where you could find all the journals and books you wanted for your research. But one day you got worried because people speaking American-English had come to the library and asked the librarians questions about you. I think you suspected they were from the American embassy in Stockholm or something like that. Anyhow, and I do not know of course if it was a causal connection, but you started looking for a new name.

And from a list of names you could choose from you found the name Sidanius, which you liked. "I just liked it," you said to me. So overnight James Brown became Jim Sidanius, and all your publications have this name. The name is international in some way, neither typical Swedish nor typical English or American. But you wanted to be Swedish, not American. How you got Swedish citizenship I do not remember. But you had already a son born by a Swedish mother and both of them must have had Swedish citizenship. So perhaps it was a simple procedure even if you did not live together. You had given the boy the name Che, after Che Guevara, a Marxist revolutionary, physician, author, and politician.

Che was a nice kid who looked up to his father and did not see much of his biological mother. We began meeting each other familywise: Che, Jim and a girlfriend named Tite and I, my wife and our kid(s). And Jim's and my friendship grew stronger.

But at the department it was hard work only. I don't think I have known anyone working so hard as Jim. He had an extremely high work capacity and worked a lot of hours a day-- more than any other PhD student at the department. Another thing about Jim was that he learnt Swedish extremely quickly. In one or two months he spoke fluent Swedish, which was incredible. But when he had finished his studies for the PhD he began to look for other things. Even if he was not very fond of the US I think he longed to be back to New York where his mother and grandmother still lived. And he started to apply for jobs all over US. He certainly understood that a successful academic career in psychology would be easier in US than in Sweden. But we continued our research together and published 22 articles between 1976 and 1989, sometimes together with a third or fourth author, even if Jim was away from Sweden got long periods and I worked on other research projects while he was.

The first international trip for me ever and the first trip for Jim in 6 years I think was to go from Stockholm to New York. But Jim was very anxious not to land at Kennedy Airport because the border control there was very tough according to Jim. So instead we took a trip to London Heathrow and a bus between Heathrow and Gatwick and then a flight to Baltimore and finally a rental car from Baltimore to Manhattan. It was not the quickest way to Manhattan. But it was OK and the Baltimore border control was not very tough.

In Manhattan, Jim's mother and grandmother lived in Washington Heights. Jim's mother had finished working and had an old-age pension. BUT Jim's grandmother still worked. She must have been around 90 years when we were there. She was born as a slave and with no reading and writing ability, she could travel a long way in the complicated subway system. Incredible.

After this trip, Jim got a three-year appointment at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. And then his American career continued. And his visits to Sweden became more and more seldom.

But Jim and I regarded each other as good friends always. And this story here gives only some examples of our lives together and apart.

*From Steven Pinker:*

Jim Sidanius was not only a distinguished social and political psychologist but a rigorous evolutionary psychologist, universally admired within that scientific community. This isn't easy. Most psychologists' use of evolution consists of adding an ornament to a discussion section consisting of a glib story about running away from predators or bonding the group. Not Jim. He grasped the deep logic of natural selection, and applied it to the psychology of discrimination and oppression in non-obvious ways. In particular he argued that racism (and other forms of out-group prejudice) has a fundamentally different evolutionary basis from sexism. In a nutshell, that racism ultimately arises from coalitions of men competing for resources and access to mates, whereas sexism ultimately arises from men seeking to control the reproductive capacity of women. This sophisticated reasoning led to surprising predictions, such that racism is disproportionately expressed by and directed toward other men. In a typical Sidanius tour de force, he mustered an astonishing range of evidence—economic, historical, psychological, sociological—to support the prediction. And true to his fierce intellectual independence, he proposed the idea knowing that it doesn't fit into any off-the-shelf political ideology. His thinking on this topic has profound implications that psychologists, and intellectuals in general, have not come to grips with, particularly for fashionable notions of intersectionality.

I'm proud of having pushed Jim's appointment in the Department of Psychology, but I could not have anticipated the selfish rewards I would reap. Jim provided incisive comments on the first draft of my book *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. He did not conceal his unease and skepticism with the main thesis, and his criticisms were trenchant, helping me shore up weak points and consider alternative explanations. But as all those who have dealt with Jim confirm, he expressed his uncompromising intellectual criticism with

appreciation, warmth, and respect. Few of us can measure up to this ideal for a colleague, a scientist, and an intellectual.

I still can't believe he's gone.