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## Relational Theory

Instructors: Susan Austrian, MD & Daniel Mollod, MD

Welcome to the Relational Theory class. When Mitchell and Greenberg published “Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Practice” in 1983, they opened a Pandora’s Box through their emphasis on specific authors (Sullivan and the British Middle group) and selective re-reading of object relations theory. The emphasis shifted to how the active ‘here and now’ handling of the transference could be transformative by reshaping internal object relations, rather than change coming primarily by reshaping the ego and defenses through insight provided by a neutral analyst. The American Relational approach would go on to become a major theoretical school and important counterpoint to ego psychological and even self-psychological approaches. It would come to question and push several technical and theoretical ideas to their limits, including how we think about abstinence, neutrality, self-disclosure, countertransference, trauma, the social surround, and the self.

However, despite ‘peaking’ in the nineties, the movement has been criticized for not cohering as a theoretical school, perhaps being more of a loose consortium of reactions or course corrections to more traditional psychoanalytic ways of viewing the mind and therapeutic action.

We’ll expect each of you to make your own determinations as to how deeply you should integrate Relational ideas into your own synthesis of what constitutes the most effective psychoanalytic work. What we can say is that going into depth each week on what the diverse community of Relational theorists has to offer will undoubtedly cause you to rethink and revise bedrock notions of the more ‘one person’ psychology models of psychoanalysis that you have come across.

### Session 1 - November 21, 2019

#### Introduction to the Relational Framework

Mitchell, S. (1988). Introduction, Relational matrix & “Drive” and the relational matrix. In *Relational concepts in psychoanalysis* (Intro & Chapters 1-2, pp. 1-62). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [Available in the library: Check reading folder or request from [library@bpsi.org](mailto:library@bpsi.org)]

Ferenczi, S. (1949). Confusion of the tongues between the adults and the child—(The language of tenderness and of passion). *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 30, 225-230. [PEP Web Link](#)

**Learning Objective:** At the conclusion of this session, candidates will be able to identify two fundamental differences between the classical and relational models.

### **Session 2 - December 5, 2019**

#### **Relational Critiques of Classical Psychoanalytic Theory & the Analyst's Subjectivity**

Hoffman, I.Z. (1983). The patient as interpreter of the analyst's experience. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 19, 389-422. [PEP Web Link](#)

Pizer, S.A. (1992). The negotiation of paradox in the analytic process. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 2(2), 215-240. [PEP Web Link](#)

**Learning Objective:** At the conclusion of this session candidates will be able to describe the critiques offered by Relational Theory of such concepts as neutrality, abstinence and anonymity.

### **Session 3 - December 12, 2019**

#### **Dissociation and Self States**

Davies, J. M. (1996). Linking the "pre-analytic" with the postclassical: Integration, dissociation and the multiplicity of unconscious process. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 32, 553-576. [PEP Web Link](#)

Bromberg, P.M. (1994). "Speak! That I may see you": Some reflections on dissociation, reality, and psychoanalytic listening. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 4(4), 517-547. [PEP Web Link](#)

**Learning Objective:** At the conclusion of this session candidates will be able to explain how dissociation is understood from a relational perspective and to define dissociation and repression.

### **Session 4 - December 19, 2019**

#### **Intersubjectivity and Analytic Thirdness**

Benjamin, J. (2004). Beyond doer and done to: An intersubjective view of thirdness. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 73(1), 5-46. [PEP Web Link](#)

Stern, D. (2003). The fusion of horizons: Dissociation, enactment, and, understanding. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 13(6), 843-873. [PEP Web Link](#)

**Learning Objective:** At the conclusion of this seminar candidates will be able to articulate the concept of the analytic third from a Relational perspective.

## **Session 5 - January 2, 2020**

### **Relational Revisions of Sex, Gender and Race: A View of the Social Surround From the Consulting Room**

Dimen, M. (1999). Between *lust* and libido: Sex, psychoanalysis, and the moment before. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 9(4), 415-440. [PEP Web Link](#)

Leary, K. (1997). Race in psychoanalytic space. *Gender and Psychoanalysis*, 2(2), 157-172. [PEP Web Link](#)

**Learning Objective:** At the conclusion of this class candidates will be able to describe one aspect of the relational perspective on culture and race.

## **Session 6 - January 9, 2020**

### **The Developmental Perspective**

Boston Change Process Study Group. (2007). The foundational level of psychodynamic meaning: Implicit process in relation to conflict, defense and the dynamic unconscious. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 88(4), 843-860. [PEP Web Link](#)

Boston Change Process Study Group. (2018). Moving through and being moved by: Embodiment in development and in the therapeutic relationship. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 54(2), 299-321. [Available in the library: [Download](#) in the library, check reading folder or request from [library@bps.org](mailto:library@bps.org)]

**Learning Objectives:** At the conclusion of this session, candidates will be able to describe the contribution of recent advances in psychoanalytic views of child development to relational theory

## **Session 7 - January 23, 2020**

### **Controversy within the Relational School: Critiques of Relational Theory**

Greenberg, J. (2001). The analyst's participation: A new look. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 49(2), 359-381. [PEP Web Link](#)

Cooper, S. (2014). The things we carry: Finding/creating the object and the analyst's self-reflective participation. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 24(6), 621-636. [PEP Web Link](#)

**Learning Objective:** At the conclusion of this class candidates will be able to explain two critiques of Relational theory from important contributors to the theory's early development.

**Session 8 - January 30, 2020**  
**Relational Theory in Practice**

Aron, L. (1991). The patient's experience of the analyst's subjectivity. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 1(1), 29-51. [PEP Web Link](#)

Renik, O. (1999). Playing one's cards face up in analysis: An approach to the problem of self-disclosure. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 68(4), 521-530. [PEP Web Link](#)

Optional:

Spezzano, C. (1995). "classical" versus "contemporary" theory—the differences that matter clinically. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 31, 20-46. [PEP Web Link](#)

**Learning Objective:** At the conclusion of this session, candidates will be able to describe one way in which the patient's experience of the person of the analyst can be both a spur to change as well as an aspect of the resistance.