



Relational Theory

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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 and implied technique that you have come across.

Session 1 - December 3, 2020 Introduction to the Relational Framework

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](#)

Optional: 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. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bps.org].

Session 2 - December 10, 2020

Relational Reimagining of the Ego Psychological Approach—Taking into Account the Analyst’s Subjectivity

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

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

Session 3 - December 17, 2020 Conflict and the Fate of the Intrapsychic in Relational Theory

Slochower (2017) Going Too Far: Relational Heroines and Relational Excess, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 27:3, 282-299. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bps.org].

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

Session 4 - January 7, 2021 Dissociation, Trauma, and Self States

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](#)

Optional: 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](#)

Session 5 - January 14, 2021

Relational Revisions of Sex, Sexual Orientation and Gender: How the Social Surround Influences Theory and Practice

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

Optional: Corbett, K. (2009). Little Hans: Masculinity Foretold. *Psychoanal Q.*, 78(3):733-764. [PEP Web Link](#)

Session 6 - January 28, 2021

Relational Revisions of Race and Ethnicity: How the Social Surround Influences Theory and Practice Part II

Holmes, D.E. (2016). Come Hither, American Psychoanalysis: Our Complex Multicultural America needs What we Have to Offer. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 64(3):569-586. [PEP Web Link](#)

Optional: Harris, A. (2012). The House of Difference, or White Silence. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 13(3):197-216. [PEP Web Link](#).

Session 7 - February 4, 2021

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](#)

Optional: 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. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bpsj.org].

Session 8 - February 18, 2021 Relational Theory in Practice

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