

Amy Schwartz Cooney, Ph.D.
NYU Post-Doctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis

The Relational Turn: Early Conversations and Controversies

In this course we will study the emergence of Relational Psychoanalysis, focusing on the ideas that propelled this paradigm shift. We begin by delving into the roots of relational thought in the confluence of interpersonal and object relational theories, the psychology of the self, constructivism, and the influence of Ferenczi's work. We will consider how these various tributaries led to the development of a view of mind as a shifting kaleidoscope of self-states and a theory of therapeutic process that emphasized unconscious dialogue and enactment. The second section of the course hones in on clinical implications of relational theory. We will study the dialogue on: mutuality/asymmetry, the analysts' subjectivity and use of self, intersubjectivity, self-disclosure, impasse and therapeutic action. In our final meetings, we will trace the expansion of the relational discourse into an interrogation of: gender, sexuality, and race. The course draws extensively on Stephen Mitchell's writings as well as seminal papers by the founding generation including: Aron, Hoffman, Stern, Davies, Bromberg, Benjamin, Ghent, Harris, Dimen, Pizer, Bass, Altman and others. Throughout the semester we will compare and contrast relational theory and technique with preceding and contributing models, underlining areas of continuity and departure. In addition to weekly readings, candidates will be asked to bring in their own ideas and clinical work to use as a backdrop for discussion.

Part 1: The Relational Turn: Theoretical Tributaries Coalescing in a New Model of Mind and of the Analytic Process

Week 1: Introduction and Overview

We begin with two chapters by Stephen Mitchell, articulating the relational reconceptualization of the patient's needs and the analysts' intentions and a brief essay in which Emanuel Ghent explores the meaning of relationality

Mitchell, S. (1993). Introduction and Chapter 1, "What Does the Patient Need". In *Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis*, pp. 1- 39. New York: Basic Books.

Mitchell, S.A. (1997). The Analysts' Intentions. In *Influence and Autonomy in Psychoanalysis*, 169-202. New York: Routledge.

Ghent, E. (1992). Foreword to *Relational Perspectives in Psychoanalysis*. Ed. Skolnick, N.J. & Warshaw, S. Analytic Press; Hillsdale, NJ.

Goals: Students will gain an overview of the core ideas underlying the Relational turn.

Week 2: Theoretical Antecedents: Object Relations

This week's readings explore theoretical antecedents of Relational Psychoanalysis in the Object Relations theories of Melanie Klein, Ronald Fairbairn, and Donald Winnicott.

Klein, M. (1946). Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms, *IJP*, 27, 99-110.

Fairbairn, R.W. (1958). On the nature and aim of psychoanalytic treatment. *IJP*, 39, 374-385.

Winnicott, D.W. (1960). The theory of the parent-infant relationship. *IJP*, 41, 586-595.

Optional:

Greenberg, J. and Mitchell, S.A. (1983). Object Relations and Psychoanalytic Models. In *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Mass. 9 – 20.

Goal: Students will understand the contribution of object relation's theories to the development of relational psychoanalysis.

Week 3: Interpersonal Theory and The Self in Psychoanalysis

Interpersonal theories contributed to the development of relational thought in placing real relationships and the experience of self at the forefront of psychoanalytic inquiry. Self-psychology, though advancing on a separate trajectory, dovetailed with these core concerns.

Greenberg, J.R. and Mitchell, S.A. (1983), Interpersonal Psychoanalysis. In *Object Relational and Psychoanalytic Theory*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass. pp. 79-115.

Mitchell, S.A. (1991). Contemporary perspectives on self: Toward an integration. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 1, 121-147

Optional:

Morrison, A.P. (1994). The breadth and boundaries of a self-psychological immersion in shame: A one and a half person perspective. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 4, 19-35.

Goals: Students will understand the contribution of interpersonal theory and the psychology of the self to the development of the relational paradigm as well as the tensions between the differing contributing perspectives.

Week 4: The Influence of Constructivism and Ferenczi's Innovations

Social-constructivism laid the philosophical groundwork for the relational turn by challenging positivism and classical assumptions about analytic knowledge, objectivity, and authority. Ferenczi's long suppressed writings sketched out a radical model of mutual influence and elasticity of technique.

Hoffman, I.Z. (1991). Toward a social-constructivist view of the psychoanalytic situation. *Psychoanalytic Dialogue*, 1, 74-105.

Aron, L. and Harris, A (2010). Sandor Ferenczi: Discovery and Rediscovery. *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, 7, 5-42.

Optional:

Hoffman, I.Z. (1992). Some practical implications of a social-constructivist view of the analytic situation. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 2, 287-304.

Goals: Students will understand the contributions of constructivism and Ferencian thought to the development of relational psychology.

Week 5: Multiplicity and Dissociation: A New model of Mind

Consistent with the post-modern ethos, relational theory challenged the notion of mind as unitary and advanced a theory of mind as a kaleidoscope of shifting self-states. Dissociation came to be seen as an organizing factor in normal psychic processes and as a defensive reaction to trauma.

Davies, J.M. (1996). Linking the “pre-analytic” with the postclassical: Integration, dissociation and the multiplicity of unconscious process. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 4, 553-576.

Bromberg, P. (1996). Standing in the spaces: The multiplicity of self and the psychoanalytic relationship. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 32, 509-535.

Optional

Mitchell, S.A. (1993). One Self or Many? In *Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis*. New York: Basic Books.

Goals: Students will learn how relational theory posited a new model of mind based on multiplicity and dissociation.

Week 6: Enactment and Emergent Experience: A New Theory of Process

Relational theory reconceptualized the analytic process as a dialogue between two individuals who are never fully aware of their own unconscious conflicts, blind spots, and contributions. As a result, dissociated and unformulated experiences are inevitably brought to life, or enacted, in the relational matrix.

Stern, D. B. (1993). Unformulated experience. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 19, 71-99

Bromberg, P.M. (2000). Potholes on the royal road: Or is it an abyss? *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 36, 5-28.

Optional

Bass, A. (2003). “E: enactments in psychoanalysis: Another medium, another message. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 13, 657-675.

Goals: Students will learn about the role of enactment in relational theory.

Part II: The Early Relational Conversation: Clinical Implications of the Relational Revision

Week 7 Interaction: Mutuality, Asymmetry and the Analyst’s Subjectivity

This week’s readings explore the relational view of the analytic project as a meeting of minds in an encounter that is mutual, asymmetric, and defined by the irreducible subjectivity of both partners.

Aron, L. (1991) The patient’s experience of the analyst’s subjectivity. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 1(1), 29-51

Renik, O. (1993). Analytic interaction: Conceptualizing technique in light of the analyst's irreducible subjectivity. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 62, 555-571.

Optional

Greenberg, J. (1996). Theoretical models and the analysts' neutrality. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 22, 87-106.

Goals: Students will learn about the relational vision of the analytic dyad as a mutual and asymmetric meeting of minds and will consider the implications of this perspective.

Week 8: Therapeutic Action, Paradox and Negotiations

Relational theory critiqued the notion of objective truth and analytic authority and reconceptualized therapeutic action as a process of negotiating wishes and needs and holding paradox.

Mitchell, S.A. (1991). Wishes, needs, and interpersonal negotiations, *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 11, 147-176.

Pizer, S. (1992). The negotiation of paradox in the analytic process. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 2, 215-240.

Slavin, M. and Kreigman, D. (1998): Why the analyst needs to change. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 8, 247-284.

Optional:

Ghent, E. (1992). Process and paradox. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 2, 135-159.

Goals: Students will learn about the relational view of the analytic encounter as process, paradox, and negotiation.

Week 9 : Intersubjectivity: Developmental, Clinical, and Theoretical Perspectives

Jessica Benjamin theorized that the capacity to recognize self and other as separate and equal subjects, or the capacity for intersubjectivity, is a core developmental and therapeutic achievement. Intersubjective self-psychologists theorized that mind is inextricably embedded in an intersubjective field. From yet another perspective, Ogden focused on the analyst's reverie as she works with intersubjective facts in "the analytic third."

Benjamin, J. (1990) Recognition and destruction: An outline of intersubjectivity. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 7, 33-47.

Stolorow, R. (1995). An intersubjective view of self-psychology. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 3, 393-400.

Ogden, T. (1994) The analytic third: Working with intersubjective clinical facts. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 75: 3-19.

Goals: Students will gain an understanding of different perspectives on intersubjectivity.

Week 10: The Analysts' Use of Self

Relational theory posits that it is incumbent on the analyst, as subjective participant/observer, to continually consider her unconscious impact and use of self. We will explore a seminal debate between Joyce Slochower and Tony Bass on "holding" the analysts' subjectivity and will also have the option to read Susan Kraemer's important paper on analytic/maternal subjectivity.

Slochower, J. (1996). Holding and the fate of the analyst's subjectivity. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 6, 323-354.

Bass, A. (1996). Holding, holding back, and holding on: Commentary on paper by Joyce Slochower. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 6 361-378.

Optional

Kraemer, S.B. (1996). "Betwixt the dark and the daylight" of maternal subjectivity: Meditations on the Threshold. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 6:765-791.

Goals: Students will understand different perspectives on the analyst's use of her subjectivity.

Week 11; **Self-Disclosure, Expressiveness, Restraint, and the Erotic**

Continuing our focus on the analyst's use of self, we will read articles on self-disclosure, expressiveness and restraint, including a controversial article by Jody Davies on erotic countertransference disclosure.

Mitchell, S.A. (2000). Intersubjectivity: Between expressiveness and restraint in the analytic relationship. In *Relationality: From Attachment to intersubjectivity*. New York: Routledge.

Davies, J.M. (1994). Love in the afternoon: a relational reconsideration of desire and dread in the countertransference. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 4, 153-170.

Spezzano, C. (1998). Listening and Interpreting—How Relational Analysts Kill Time Between Disclosures and Enactments: Commentary on Papers by Bromberg and by Greenberg. *Psychoanalytic. Dial.*, 8(2):237-246.

Optional:

Burke, W. & Tansey, M. (1991), Countertransference disclosure and models of therapeutic action. *Contemporary. Psychoanalytic.*, 27: 351-384.

Goals: Students will understand the relational conversation concerning expressiveness, restraint, self-disclosure, and the erotic.

Week 12; Working Through Impasse

From the relational perspective, the analytic process is marked by continual cycles of rupture and repair, stalemates and negotiations in which the "third" or dialogic space is lost and regained. This week's readings explore different conceptualizations of impasse.

Davies, J.M. (2004). Whose Bad Objects Are We Anyway? *Psychoanalytic. Dial.*, 14(6):711-732.

Harris, A. (2009). "You Must Remember This". *Psychoanalytic. Dial.*, 19(1):2-21.

Optional

Ringstrom, P. (1998), Therapeutic impasses in contemporary psychoanalytic treatment: revisiting the double bind hypothesis. *Psychoanalytic. Dial.*, 8: 297-316.

Goals: Students will learn about relational views on impasse.

Part III: The Widening Scope of Relational Inquiry

The early relationalists came of age in a time of social and political change and they brought their passionate concerns about race, gender and sexuality into the analytic dialogue. In this final section we will study some of the early papers in which relationalists grappled with these topics.

Class 13: Gender

Dimen, M. (1991). Deconstructing difference: Gender, splitting, and transitional space. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 1 (3), 335-352.

Harris, A. (1991). Gender as Contradiction. *Psychoanalytic. Dial.*, 1(2):197-224.

Optional

Benjamin, J. (1995). Sameness and Difference: Toward an “over inclusive” model of gender developmental. *Psychoanalytic. Inquiry.*, 15 (1): 125-142.

Goals: Students will gain an understanding of the novel ways in which gender was reconceptualized relationally.

Class 14: Sexuality

Stein, R. (1998). The Enigmatic Dimension of Sexual Experience: The “Otherness” of Sexuality and Primal Seduction. *Psychoanalytic. Q.*, 67(4):594-625.

Frommer, M.S. (2006). On the Subjectivity of Lustful States of Mind. *Psychoanalytic. Dial.*, 16(6): 639-664.

Optional

Blechner, M. (1993), Homophobia in psychoanalytic writing and practice. *Psychoanalytic. Dial.*, (3), 627-637.

Goals: Students will learn about relational views challenging the pathologizing of homosexuality and exploring the subjectivity of lustful states of mind and the enigma of sexuality.

Class 15: Race

Altman, N. (2000). Black and White Thinking. *Psychoanalytic. Dial.*, 10(4):589-605.

Suchet, M. (2004). A Relational Encounter with Race. *Psychoanalytic. Dial.*, 14(4):423-438.

Optional

Leary, K. (1995). “Interpreting in the Dark”. *Psychoanalytic. Psychology.*, 12(1):127-140.

Goals: Students will become familiar with early papers interrogating race and its role in the transference countertransference matrix.