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David E. Scharff, M.D.



SCHARFF NOTES

A Primer of Object
Relations Therapy



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A Primer of Object Relations Therapy

*by Jill Savege Scharff, M.D.,
and David E. Scharff, M.D.*



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Preface

As we traveled around the United States teaching seminars in object relations therapy, we recognized the need for a basic text. So we decided to write this primer on British object relations theory. We want to reach the undergraduate student who is learning the fundamentals of theory and therapy as well as the graduate student in psychology, social work, or marital and family therapy. We hope to interest first-year residents in psychiatry and interns in psychology, social work, marital and family therapy, and pastoral counseling. We think that the book will be useful for trainees in occupational therapy, art and other expressive therapies, and psychiatric nursing. And finally, we hope that the primer will be a compact and convenient resource text for the teachers of these various undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students, and for the experienced clinician who wants to integrate the

unfamiliar perspective of object relations theory into an existing approach.

The primer stands alone or may prepare the reader for wider reading in object relations theory, including study of our more advanced texts: *Object Relations Family Therapy*, *Foundations of Object Relations Family Therapy*, *Object Relations Couple Therapy*, *Projective and Introjective Identification and the Use of the Therapist's Self*, *Refinding the Object and Reclaiming the Self* (Jason Aronson Inc. 1987, 1989, 1991, 1992, and 1992, respectively), and *The Sexual Relationship: an Object Relations View of Sex and the Family* (Routledge and Kegan Paul 1982).

Mental health professionals from remote parts of the country have no access to object relations theory other than through textbooks. When puzzled, they have no colleagues to turn to for help. Although they may have enjoyed our more complex books, they want simplification and clarification of some of the ideas and further discussion of how the concepts apply in their clinical situations. The content of this volume derives from these students' most frequently asked questions, together with our responses. Through our lecture, discussion, and dialogue format, we recreate the seminar for them and for you, in order to take you beyond the forbidding aspects of theory and technique and give you access to object relations theory and therapy as a sensible way of thinking and working that is easily understood and immediately applicable to clinical practice.

We would like to thank Debby Ziff and Jo Parker for typing the first draft at lightning speed. We are grateful to Pearl Green for taking care of our children and to Kate and Nell Scharff for entertaining them so that we had time to write. We thank Carolyn Gruber and Kathleen Gray who read our manuscript to assess its relevance to their psychotherapy curricula in local schools of social work.

We remain grateful to our supportive and enthusiastic publisher, Jason Aronson, who welcomed the idea of a primer and who authorized the Object Relations Seminars at which we had the teaching experience that led to this work. It was a pleasure

working with our calm, attentive production editor, Judy Cohen, her editorial director, Muriel Jorgensen, and editorial assistant Cheryl Ballew, who handled promotion.

We have reinvented the identities of the subjects of our clinical descriptions so as to preserve a personal context for their universally observable dynamics without betraying their confidentiality. To those individuals, couples, and families, we give special thanks.

We gratefully acknowledge the intellectual stimulation and encouragement from mental health professionals at our seminars, where their questions continually provoked further thought and challenged us to be clear and concise. This book is for them and for you, mental health professionals and students who are curious about the object relations approach.

How To Use This Primer

In the interest of readability, we do not break the flow to pause for references in the body of this text. When we use a concept or an author's name with which you may not be familiar, we cite it briefly in the chapter notes that follow each chapter. In Chapter 19, we offer a guide to further reading both for the beginner and for the advanced student of object relations theory. To satisfy our concern for attribution and accessibility to reference materials, we do give a complete reference section at the end of the book. The reference section is divided into eight categories to simplify the advancing student's search for more to read in a particular category of interest. The eight categories are: object relations theory of individual and group, application of object relations theory to couple and family therapy, countertransference, integration with other approaches from the analytic to the behavioral,

integration with American interpersonalists and classical Freudian theory, self psychology, Freudian theory, and other relevant contributions.

With this design, you can read uninterruptedly and take in the material as a whole the first time through. You can skip the references altogether, look at them at the end of reading each chapter or not until you have finished the book. Those of you who want to track down sources will search for author and date in the chapter notes at the end of each chapter and then find the full annotation in the relevant category of the formal reference section at the end of the book. We hope that this primer format will bring object relations theory to you clearly and easily.

The primer may be used as the only text on object relations theory for the eclectic therapist. It serves as an introduction and guide to reading our more advanced texts. It also leads to wider recommended reading in object relations theory and therapy.

About the Authors

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The Scharffs' publications include *Object Relations Family Therapy*, *Object Relations Couple Therapy*, *The Sexual Relationship*, *Foundations of Object Relations Family Therapy*, *Projective and Introjective Identification and the Use of the Therapist's Self*, *Refinding the Object and Reclaiming the Self*, and *Scharff Notes: A Primer of Object Relations Therapy*.

The Scharffs have been invited to speak at symposia, workshops, training institutes, and annual association meetings in couple and family therapy and psychoanalysis. Separately and together, they have a growing national and international reputation as authors, editors, teachers, and therapists.

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