

## **Between you and me: a systematic review of object relations assessment.**

*Background:* Object relations (OR) are a key construct for psychodynamic theory and practice: they allow to accurately describe complex relational phenomena in normal and pathological personalities, serving as a diagnostic and clinical tool. The accurate assessment of OR is relevant to both researchers and clinicians willing to better understand interpersonal dynamics.

*Method:* I conducted a systematic review of the empirical instruments that assess OR on PsycInfo and Pubmed.

*Results:* The search yielded 49 instruments: 31 were patient-based instruments, such as self-reports, projective tests, and interviews, and 18 were clinician-rated instruments. Many of these tools are well known in the scientific community; some instruments among the less popular show interesting potential and might benefit from further empirical support.

*Discussion:* The assessment of OR rests on several valid instruments, yet there is room for improvement. The development of new and existing tools referring to Kernberg's theory of personality organization could contribute to an up-to-date, empirically informed assessment of object relations; also, the inquiry of qualitative aspects of object relations could advance the understanding of pathological interpersonal functioning.