

## Transference and Countertransference in Sandplay

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July 1997

### Developmental Views on Transference and Countertransference

Transference was first used by Freud "to describe what went on when his women patients who fell in love with him. He realized that his patients were repeating impulses and feelings they had experienced earlier, usually in their relationships with parental figures, in their relationship with him" (Bradway and McCoard, 1997, p. 31).

Jung believed that the client and therapist were involved in a two-way interaction in which the therapist could not come from a position of authority for s/he was in treatment just as was the client. It was the therapist's development as a person, rather than his/her knowledge, that would ultimately be decisive in the treatment (Samuels, 1986). Jung also believed that, in the transference, the therapist stands in relation to the client both as a person and as a projection of an inner content.

The issue of transference in child therapy has historically been exceedingly controversial. Anna Freud believed that, since the child was in the process of developing a mother-child relationship, transference (i.e., transferring of client's feelings and behavior that have been generated by early experiences with significant others onto the therapist) was not a central issue in the therapeutic process with young children. Melanie Klein, on the other hand, believed that the analysis of transference was critical in understanding infantile traumas and deprivations, and that children were ripe for analysis of the transference because the child was currently in the grip of the living experience of the mother-child interaction.

Margaret Lowenfeld had yet another view on transference. She wanted the client's central transference to be to the sand tray and materials themselves. Lowenfeld viewed the therapist's role to be one of facilitating the child's own personal understanding of his/her sand tray creation. Transference to the therapist rather than to the materials thus interfered with the child's understanding of the tray (Lowenfeld, 1939).

Kalff did not refer to transference in the classical sense of transferring old feelings onto the therapist, rather she was influenced by both Jung and Lowenfeld. For Kalff, "transference was the providing of space for the realization of one's potential" (Bradway 1991, p. 25). She believed that, if a therapist could create a "free and protected space," this would facilitate a positive transference to the therapist which might, in turn, enhance the constellation of the Self. Over time Kalff's views on transference evolved to include the idea that the relationship between client and therapist was sometimes directly expressed in the tray. Kalff began to see how the Sandplay creations themselves often directly referred to the client-therapist relationship. She began to see, for example, how a miniature chosen by a client might even depict feelings that the client had toward the therapist.

Hayao Kawai, a Japanese analyst, speaks of the connection between Sandplay therapist and client in terms of transference that occurs on the Hara level (Kawai, 1985) by which direct, nonverbal communication passes from the center (Hara) of one person to the center of the other person. Most recently, Bradway and McCoard (1997), American analysts, use the term co-transference to designate the therapeutic feeling relationship between therapist and client. This feeling relationship gets evoked by the Sandplay experience as the sand picture is created and takes place almost simultaneously, rather than sequentially as the term transference-countertransference suggests. The sand picture can produce an empowered form of relating that draws both the therapist and the client into a deep transference both to the picture and also to each other through the viewing of the picture.

than sequentially as the term transference-countertransference suggests. The sand picture can produce an empowered form of relating that draws both the therapist and the client into a deep transference both to the picture and also to each other through the viewing of the picture.

It is only recently that therapists have begun to consider and take seriously into account indications of the transference in the trays. A client may even include a symbolic representation of the therapist in the picture. In this way the state of the transference to the therapist is embodied in the picture. Heretofore, little attention has been paid to the many ways in which pictures are made that speak to the therapeutic relationship. Our consideration of how the transference makes itself known in the sand creations has developed out of observing the variety of ways the transference becomes manifest in the sand.

Counter-transfer has historically been viewed as a hindrance to therapeutic progress. However, the current view is that countertransference can also be helpful in the therapeutic endeavor. We are defining countertransference as including all the responses a therapist has to his/her client, including all feelings, fantasies, interactions, etc. Some of these reactions will be conscious, while others will be unconscious.

#### Manifestations of Transference and Countertransference in Sandplay

1. The content of the tray may relate in some way to the therapist.
2. The client identifies a particular object as the therapist.
3. The use of Sandplay is either resisted or too easily accommodated.
4. The placement of significant figures or the orientation of figures in the tray may be related to where the therapist is sitting in relation to the tray.
5. The therapist is asked to participate and enact a specific role in the Sandplay drama.
6. Two similar miniatures are placed together perhaps portraying the feelings about the transference.
7. The Sandplay miniature is either openly shared or hidden from the therapist's view.
8. The miniatures are treated uniquely (e.g., destroyed, stolen, envied, and valued).
9. The therapist's miniature collection is criticized, praised, or compared to another's collection.

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