

Transference between Teenager Students and Their Teachers Nowadays

Henrique Magro de Siqueira¹ and Geraldo A. Fiamenghi-Jr^{1*}

¹UNIFAAT - Department of Psychology Estrada Municipal Juca Sanches, 1050 - Atibaia, Brazil

***Corresponding author:**

Geraldo A. Fiamenghi-Jr

Received: 03.12.2019

Accepted: 12.12.2019

Published: 28.12.2019

Abstract: This research aimed to observe and reflect on transference in adolescence, specifically in student-teacher relationship, within school contexts. Therefore, theoretical concepts based in Psychoanalysis were identified and related to observations conducted in a government full-time school in a country town in São Paulo State, Brazil. This research was important to investigate the correlation between reality and literature, taking in account the historical, social and cultural scenarios in which adolescence is inserted nowadays.

Keywords: adolescence, student-teacher, Psychoanalysis, transference.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence, defined as a life stage when psychobiological changes occur, has been studied throughout the years. Sometimes, teenagers are the depositaries of hope to solve society's problems; other times they are seen as the cause of those problems. Authors end up characterizing adolescence as a stage when the person lives a transition from infancy to adulthood, marked by several demands, typical of a capitalist society, especially concerning performance and achievements, and at the same time, uncertainties abound due to the unpredictability of the immediacy context nowadays (Kotzent, J. 2015). According to Knobel (Knobel, M. 1981), adolescence can be defined as

“[...] a period of life during which the individual tries to establish his adult identity, relying on the first internalized object-parental relations and verifying the reality offered by the social milieu, via the use of biophysical elements in development at his disposition, that tend to stabilize the personality in a genital plan, that is only possible with the mourning for the childhood identity” (p. 26).

Given the circumstances of that stage in human life, and stemming from a psychological knowledge, considering the effects of a socio-cultural

context where the subject lives, attitudes presented by teenagers could be considered pathological in other stages of life but, as they are included inside this period of intense psychological and physical transformation, they must be regarded as normal (Knobel, M. 1981). From the search for adult models that contribute to the constitution of their own identity, the tendency to group with peers in a highly identificatory way, discoveries and explorations due to the genitals development, and the attachment to social ideas, adolescence is marked by processes based in feelings and thoughts, sometimes extreme and even contradictory (Dolto, F. 1988). On the other hand, Freud's considerations on schooling issues are a century old; if before, the only access to information was the teacher, today content is practically illimited and can be accessed in every mobile device, sometimes grinding youngsters' references, as well as their investment in their teachers (Lima, N. *et al.*, 2016). As a result, school context is complex and showing new features, when compared to past decades. Apparently, a new way to deal with oneself, with peers, and with the world in general has developed, in pace with the advent of virtual spaces, such as social medias (Lima, N. *et al.*, 2016).

Transference, as a word per se, is not exclusive to the psychoanalytical field, being used in other scientific contexts, with the meaning of movement, of leaving a point to reach another. In the same way, in

Quick Response Code



Journal homepage:

<http://crosscurrentpublisher.com/ccjhss/>

Copyright © 2019 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

DOI : 10.36344/ccjihss.2019.v05i12.002

Psychoanalysis, Freud has appropriated from this term, recognizing and being impressed by the recurrent phenomenon by which the patient seemed to revive, in the presence of the analyst, certain episodes and feelings experienced before, in other circumstances, especially those referring to parental figures (Roudinesco, E. & Plon, M. 2011). In his work, *Observations on Transference Love*, Freud explains to psychoanalysts how that phenomenon happens and the possible directions in analytical practice for the therapeutic aims to be achieved. It is expected that the patient be in love with the therapist at some point of the process (Freud, S. 1915/1979). If the analyst corresponds to that love proposal, therapy would fail, because the patient would have reproduced the dynamics already established in this psyche. The fact is that transference is also a resistance, bring a false impression that the cure was reached, for the focus is dislocated from the life history to reside in the analyst. On the other hand, if the analyst completely denies the affection expressed by the patient, the analysis will fail as well. Probably, the patient will stop the process, and start over and over again, with another analysts, and the dynamics of the neurosis will remain, instituting a false version of the true aims of the analysis (Freud, S. 1915/1979). Thus, the best action would be to conduct therapy in a way that the energy from the transference love be used as a relevant point to push therapy, that is, not denying its existence, but working with the patient in order for him/her be comfortable to express love yearning, leading to the identification of child object choices (Freud, S. 1915/1979). Besides, Freud introduces the concepts of positive and negative transference, describing the dynamics between the two, translated by the concept of ambivalence, meaning that both forms of transference coexist and alternate during analysis (Freud, S. 1912/1979). Roudinesco and Plon (Roudinesco, E. & Plon, M. 2011) explain that psychoanalysts soon noticed that transference is not exclusive to the therapeutic setting, expanding the concept to other life situations.

“Since 1909, Sandor Ferenczi observed that transference was present in all human relations: teacher-student, doctor-patient, and so. But he noticed that, in analysis, as well as in hypnosis and suggestion; the patient unconsciously put the therapist in a parental position” (p.1574).

Freud describes school relations between students and teachers as transferential, for the school arises beyond the family as a transition between infancy and adulthood. In addition to allowing the transmission of knowledge to teenagers, the student starts to contest fantasies of parental omnipotence, electing the teacher as a substitute. It is exactly in transference that all affection projected in the teacher allows the learning process and knowledge apprehension to prevail (Freud, S. 1914/1979).

Thus, the aim of this research was to discuss transference in teenager's relationships with teachers at school, its implications and possibilities in this day and age.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research was conducted in a government full-time school, in a country town in São Paulo State, Brazil.

In the period of 10 hours, randomly divided in 4 days, 8th Grade (13- to 14-year-old), 9th Grade (14- to 15-year-old), 1st High School (15- to 16-year-old), 2nd High School (16- to 17-year-old) and 3rd High School (17- to 18-year-old) students were observed during class activities, as well as during the break (all classes mixed in the yard).

Families of students and teachers were informed about the research and signed a term of agreement before the observations started.

Observations were registered in a field diary and analyzed according to Psychoanalysis.

This research is part of a larger study, approved by the University Ethics Committee (CAAE n. 0087.0.272.000-10).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The observations are shown as examples of situations discussed, focusing in three main aspects: adolescence, school, transference.

Considering adolescence as a transitional period between infancy and adulthood, and the implications due to a capitalist society, it is possible to understand school as an institution that must prepare the student to answer to the needs of the world, related to labour market (Kotzent, J. 2015). This can be expressed by the following situation observed:

“The class organization was different from all the other days, due to the number of teachers, as well as the theme: labour market. Students had other coursepacks, and the teachers were explaining labour opportunities, market needs, and the educational level normally required. The teachers filmed a game depicting a simulation of professional life, such as the consequences of choices made” (3rd observation, 1st High School).

As the school is continuously present in teenagers' daily life, students participate in a massive coexistence space, with other peers. It is obvious to bear in mind that such a space, not only physical, but also social, allows to the expansion of natural dynamics at that stage, such as peer identification, peer groups, confrontation, sexuality (Knobel, M. 1981). Such dynamics were observed in the situations below:

“Some teenagers started swearing and, at one point, one of them pulled down another one’s trousers. The teacher immediately sent him to the director’s office” (1st observation, 8th Grade).

“A group of girls was closed in a circle, constantly talking, showing photos in the mobile phones, referring to their physical looks in the photos” (1st observation, 1st High School).

“The position of teenagers in class was interesting. There was only a girl in front, near the teacher. At the very back, a group of boys were playing with their mobile phones, sharing earphones. A boy was sitting alone, observing the others. During the activities, one of the boys pulled up his sleeves, to show off his biceps, using the mobile phone as a mirror” (2nd observation, 3rd High School).

In this period, when macrosocial and psychobiological characteristics incise in changes and transformations, there are special figures that contribute to the constitutional process of those youngsters, supporting and serving as guides to adult world (Lima, N. *et al.*, 2016). Teenagers search for references in adults around them, that could be instrumental in the building of their personalities (Knobel, M. 1981). Therefore, when talking about school, the incontestable reality is that teachers are the adults whom the teenagers have more contact with:

“When the first activity was over, all the students went downstairs to the patio, instead of the courtyard, as the teacher refused that option because it was raining. Teenagers assembled the equipment by themselves and were divided in two different groups, one with girls, the other with boys. They controlled the game, following the rules and the teacher was around and, in some moments, played with the boys’ group” (3rd observation, 8th Grade).

Transference happens in relations between patients and their analysts and it is possible to divide it into positive and negative transference (Freud, S. 1915/1979) (Freud, S. 1912/1979). However, psychoanalysts understand that transference is also present in other sorts of relations, such as teachers and students, in schools’ settings (Roudinesco, E. & Plon, M. 2011). Consequently, negative transference was observed, especially as indifference towards the teacher, such as in the examples below:

“Few students were engaged in the activities suggested by the teacher in classroom. Many of them were using earphones, and exchanged messages via mobile phones” (1st observation, 8th Grade).

“Very few students were paying attention to the teacher’s explanation. The majority of them seemed to be watching videos in their mobile phones” (1st observation, 2nd High School).

Regarding positive transference, it was observed when students approached teachers, showing respect, as well as offering help in a friendly manner, as indicated by the situations below:

“Some students, although aggressive towards peers, were very soft and respectful when relating to teachers” (2nd observation, 9th Grade).

“At some point, a teacher asked three teenagers not to sit on the table and they obeyed, without complaining. One of the students offered help to the PE teacher and they run beside each other, carrying the equipment to the playing field, in a very friendly way. Another student offered to help a cleaner staff to take a bucket of water to the cafeteria” (4th observation, all classes mixed in the yard).

In this transference dynamics between teacher and students, teachers play a substitutive role to parental figures. Those dynamics carry omnipotent fantasies, due to the possibilities of acquiring knowledge outside the family. Therefore, transmission of knowledge is possible, due to the affection shared (Freud, S. 1914/1979). On the other hand, the easy access to technologies nowadays makes it hard for teachers to be invested by the student as knowledge providers and role models (Lima, N. *et al.*, 2016). One of the teachers found a way of using technology in her favor, allowing students to use mobile phones in class, to discuss subjects.

“A mobile phone was used to settle a question during the activity. The teacher and students were very relaxed, concerning the subject studied and to personal questions, such as appearance” (2nd observation, 3rd High School).

That attitude is in accordance to a proposal of taking an optimistic view on generational conflict, as a driving force to human evolution (Kotzent, J. 2015).

Freud (1915/1979) advises analysts to be careful and zealous to their patients’ transference, not refusing feelings, but handling them to provide a comfortable and safe environment for the patients to express themselves, turning that affective drive into a propelling force to self-knowledge. Maybe that should be a recommendation to offer schools and teachers, not to prevent, or deny transference (positive, or negative) emerging from the students, but using it as a drive to innovation in the interrelation web implied in education nowadays.

CONCLUSION

Concepts related to adolescence and its idiosyncrasies, such as the transient cultural character, and its preparing function, according to the social logic were legible in this study. Maybe because school itself is also an institution with peculiarities, social representations and functions, appearing as one of the most important attempts to making contact with teenagers.

Focusing in the relations between students and teachers, it was possible to identify transference in all configurations, as described by Freud and other psychoanalysts.

Therefore, a positive result was allowing for the reflection on transference dynamics in government schools and the alternatives and possibilities arising, considering the scenario at this moment in time.

However, this research had limitations, mainly in the precision and amount of information collected. Consequently, further studies should involve more observations and possible interviews with students and teachers, providing more data for analysis.

REFERENCES

1. Kotzent, J. (2015). *Psicanálise na adolescência*. From http://apvp.com.br/biblioteca/biblioteca_28.pdf.
2. Knobel, M. (1981). A síndrome da adolescência normal (pp.24-62). In A. Aberastury & M. Knobel (Eds.), *Adolescência normal: Um enfoque psicanalítico*. Porto Alegre: Artes Médicas.
3. Dolto, F. (1988). *La cause des adolescents*. Paris: Robert Lafond.
4. Lima, N., Viola, D., Nobre, M., Berni, J., Lisita, H. Kelles, N., & Teixeira, L. (2016). Adolescência e saber no contexto das tecnologias digitais: há transmissão possível? *Revista aSEPHallus de Orientação Lacaniana*, 11(21), 42-65.
5. Roudinesco, E. & Plon, M. (2011). *Dictionnaire de la Psychanalyse*. Paris: Fayard.
6. Freud, S. (1915/1979). Observaciones sobre el "Amor de Transferencia" (pp.1689-1696). In S. Freud, *Obras Completas*, v. II. Madrid: Editorial Nueva.
7. Freud, S. (1912/1979). La dinámica de la transferencia (pp. 1648-1653). In S. Freud, *Obras Completas*, v. II. Madrid: Editorial Nueva.
8. Freud, S. (1914/1979). Sobre la psicología del colegial (pp.1892-1894). In S. Freud, *Obras Completas*, v. II. Madrid: Editorial Nueva.