



The New Jersey Institute for Training in Psychoanalysis

#S204 - Countertransference

Instructor: Wilda Mesias, PhD

Spring 2025

Via Zoom

Course description: This course addresses the concept of countertransference in psychoanalysis. Countertransference, narrowly defined, is the analyst's transference. The term initially described situations in which the analyst's feelings, attitudes, and reactions toward the analysand are the product of the analyst's early life. The term has evolved to signify all of the analyst's reactions to the patient's conscious and unconscious, the analyst's identification with the internal objects of the analysand, and a relational/constructivist mutually-influenced phenomenon.

Using as a point of departure Freud's notion of countertransference we will track the evolution of the term, moving from a classical perspective to views presented by ego psychology, object relations, self psychology, and contemporary relational perspectives. We will gain a deeper understanding of the concept and the invaluable tool it represents in treatment, paying close attention to the self-scrutiny of the analyst.

We will address the different types of countertransference inherent in different diagnoses via case presentations and reading material. We will see how countertransference has received increased attention in the literature, mainly as a result of an increased interest in the analytic relationship.

Course objectives:

- 1) To analyze and examine the concept of countertransference.
- 2) To show the evolution of the concept from its inception to contemporary perspectives
- 3) To consider the many ways in which countertransference presents during treatment.
- 4) To illustrate how different schools of thought might approach the use and analysis of countertransference.
- 5) To analyze and consider countertransference in reference to intersectionality.

Course requirements:

A four-to six-page final paper that highlights your understanding and application of the concepts.

Course etiquette and confidentiality:

Given that we will be having our class discussions on Zoom, it is critical that we all be respectful and mindful of one another's time and space. As such, please keep your cameras on and mute yourselves while others are presenting their thoughts. Additionally, because our case discussions and other discussions may feature confidential clinical information (or other sensitive information not to be disclosed outside of the learning environment), ***it is imperative that you (1) find a place in which to log in to the class that is private and in which you and others cannot be overheard and (2) refrain from discussion of the above-mentioned confidential or sensitive information outside of our class time.***

Readings and material:

You will need the following text available on Amazon:

Waska, R. (2022). *Projective identification: A contemporary introduction*. Routledge.
{hereinafter Waska, R. (2022).}

The rest of the readings will be found on a Dropbox folder I will make available to all of you.

Class and reading list:

Class I: Introduction to the concept. We will begin with an introduction to the concept of countertransference and its historical evolution.

Readings:

- Gelso, C. J. & Hayes, J. (2007). *Countertransference and the therapist inner experience: Perils and possibilities*. Routledge. Chapters 1 & 2.
- Freud, S. (1912). Recommendations for physicians on the psychoanalytic method of treatment. *Standard Edition, XII*, 109-120.
- Freud, S. (1913). On beginning the treatment. *Standard Edition, XII*, 121-144.

Viewing:

- Hewitson, O. (2014). VIDEO - Jaques Lacan on Obsession and the Rat Man. *Lacan Online*. <https://www.lacanonline.com/2014/06/video-jacques-lacan-on-obsession-and- the- rat-man- case/>.

Class II: Development of concept. We will see the concept of countertransference undergo further development. We will analyze how the analyst's experience in relation to the patient's transference informs the psychoanalytic encounter.

Readings:

- Gelso, C. J. & Hayes, J. (2007). *Countertransference and the therapist inner experience: Perils and possibilities*. Routledge. Chapters 4 & 7.
- Ferenczi, S. (1949). Confusion of tongues between adults and children: The language of tenderness and of passion. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 30, 225-230.
- Jacobs, T. (1999). Countertransference past and present: A review of the concept. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 80(3), 575-594.
- Borgogno, F. (2016). A special learning experience about transference and countertransference. Dynamics at the beginning of my psychoanalytic training. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 76 (2), 99-110.

Class III: Countertransference as a source of information. We will describe and explain how the experience of countertransference may be used as a source of information in understanding the patient's symbolic, pre-verbal, verbal and non-verbal communications.

Readings:

- Waska, R. (2022). Chapters 1 & 2.
- Heimann, P. (1950). On counter-transference. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 31, 81-84.
- Winnicott, D.W. (1949). Hate in the countertransference. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 30, 69-74.
- Stefana, A., Hinshelwood, R.D., & Borensztein, C.L. (2021). Racker and Heimann on countertransference: Similarities and differences. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 90(1), 105-137
- Grossmark, C. (2023) Mothers, Daughters, and Hatred: The Void in the Mirror. *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 40:31-37
- Ogden, T. (2021). What alive means: On Winnicott's "transitional objects and transitional phenomena". *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 102, 5, 837-856.

Optional:

- Racker, H. (1988). Chapter 6. Transference and countertransference (full book available on Dropbox). *The International Psycho-Analytical Library*, 73, 1-196.

Class IV: Countertransference and character/personality disorders. We will discuss the process of transference-countertransference: reactivity and inter-reactivity, particularly in the context of patients that exhibit character and personality disorders.

Readings:

- Gabbard, G. (1991). Technical approaches to transference hate in the analysis of borderline patients. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 72, 625-636.
- Kernberg, O.F. (2007). The almost untreatable narcissistic patient. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 55 (2), 503-539.
- Blass, R.B. (2020). The role of repetition in narcissism and self sacrifice: A Freudian Kleinian reflection on the person's foundational love of the other.

Optional:

- Sell, C. & Benecke, C. (2023). Negative feelings toward borderline patients: Are layperson emotional reactions disorder-specific? *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 40, 115-120.

Class V: Schools of thought. We will evaluate other perspectives on countertransference from different psychoanalytic schools of thought.

Reading:

- Bollas, C. (1982). On the Relation to the self as an object. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 63, 347-359.
- Bromberg, P. (2001). Treating patients with symptoms—and symptoms with patience. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 11(6), 891-912.
- Aisenstein, M. (2020). A view of patients with somatic painful conditions. *Romanian Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 13(1), 1-28.
- Waska, R. (2022). Chapters 3 & 4.

Optional:

- Alfonso, C.A. (2023). Clinical implications of countertransference in the treatment of addictions. *Psychodynamic Psychiatry*, 51, 133-140.
- Bollas, C. (1983). Expressive uses of the countertransference—Notes to the patient from oneself. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 19, 1-33.

Class VI: Enactment: We will analyze the different views and approaches to the concept of enactment in the therapeutic encounter.

Reading:

- Corbella, V. (2021). Enactment: A necessary conceptual review. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 102, 51-67.
- Katz, G. (2014). *The play within the play: The enacted dimension of psychoanalytic process*. Routledge. Chapters 3 & 4.
- Lev, G. (2023). Conditions for love: The psychoanalytic situation and the analyst's emotions. *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, 83, 22-25.
- Waska, R. (2022). Chapters 5 & 6.
- Davies, J. (1994). "Love in the afternoon": A relational consideration of desire and dread in the countertransference. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 16, 665-686.

Optional:

- Bolognini, S. (2022). Hidden unconscious, buried unconscious, implicit unconscious. *The Italian Psychoanalytic Annual*, 16, 87-100.

Class VII: Different ideas in the countertransference dimension.. We will consider the different ideas on the subjective experience of the analyst.

Readings:

- Shapira-Berman, O. (2022). When should we not interpret? The analyst's transformative act as a vital contribution to the patient's sense of being real and alive. *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, 1-19.
- Atlas, G. (2018). Has sexuality anything to do with relationality? *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 28, 330-339.

- Barratt, B. B. (2021). Notes on free-associative listening: “I Am Also a Stranger Here”. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 108, 251-27.
- Bugliani, A. & Rowlandson, B. (2023). The therapist’s struggle to hold hope when all seems lost. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 33, 351-367.
- Waska, R. (2022). Chapters 7, 8, 9, & 10.

Class VIII: Intersectionality, countertransference, and final thoughts. We will address intersectionality and countertransference. We will evaluate the course as a whole.

Readings:

- Kite, J.V. (2008). Ideas of influence: The impact of the analyst’s character on the analysis. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 77 (4), 1075-1104 .
- Goedert, M. (2020). Racism in the Countertransference. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 89 (4), 715-740.
- Offman, H. (2023). On Being an “expert-enough expert”: Working psychoanalytically with transgender patients. *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, 20, 1, 49-64.
- Waska, R. (2022). Chapter 11, 12, 13, & 14.

Optional:

- Adams, C. (2022) Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Psychosocial Dimensions of Adversity among Black Youth. *Journal of Infant, Child & Adolescent Psychotherapy* 21, 108-124.
- Long, C., Matt, H., Jwili, O., & Vilakazi, Z. (2021). Racial difference, rupture and repair: A view from the couch and back. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 30, 698-715.