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## British Journal of Guidance & Counselling

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:  
<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713406946>

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Online Publication Date: 01 February 2003

To cite this Article: Mcauley, M. J. (2003) 'Transference, countertransference and mentoring: the ghost in the process', *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 31:1, 11 — 23

To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/0306988031000086134

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0306988031000086134>

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# Transference, countertransference and mentoring: the ghost in the process

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**ABSTRACT** *The concepts of transference and countertransference are used in this paper to explore some of the deeper dynamics of the relationship between mentor and mentee; it is hoped that this perspective gives a useful gaze on the mentoring process. Three aspects of the relationship are examined. The first is an exploration of the ambivalent relationship of mentor and mentee to the third party at the meeting—the organisation. The second is an examination of the mentoring process where transference theory illuminates aspects of the power, authority, control, affiliation and resistance in the freezing, unfreezing and refreezing aspects of the ebb and flow of transference and countertransference. The third aspect is an examination of the relationship between mentor and mentee with a glance at the narcissistic impulses of altruism and a sceptical brush with the dominant image of unconditional positive regard that is commonly supposed to flow from mentor to mentee.*

## **Introduction: mentoring and transference, an unacknowledged relationship**

The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the dynamics of the mentoring relationship through a psychoanalytic gaze, with particular reference to the theory of transference in order to develop an understanding of some of the issues of power and authority, of resistance and affiliation that are present in the relationship.

We have accepted the sorts of definition of mentoring that suggest that it is a relationship that provides career and psychosocial developmental functions for the mentee (e.g. Aryee & Chay, 1994) and emotional gains for the mentor (e.g. Aryee *et al.*, 1996), whilst acknowledging the inadequacy of ‘explaining mentoring through a single, universal and prescriptive definition, or “type”’ (Gibb, 1994, p. 47). The mentor is characteristically older than the mentee, more ‘expert’ and ‘knowledgeable’ than the mentee (as in, for example, ‘the ways that exceptional performers can help develop the highest potential of others’; Gibb, 1994, p. 58), and usually has ascribed seniority in the organisation. There is also a suggestion in the literature that the mentor is representative (albeit independent) of the organisation within which

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the mentoring relationship takes place. Garvey (1999) suggests that in collectivist organisations mentoring is valued because it is seen to be developmental and also it helps to maintain the organisational status quo; whereas in organisations that tend to be individualist the mentor 'provides remedial help for the mentee' (p. 52). Mentoring has also been characterised, from a Foucaultian perspective, as a disciplinary technology of avowal through personal revelation in which power, control and resistance are inextricably intertwined (Covaleski *et al.*, 1998). Carden (1990) has pointed out that the 'benefits and hazards of mentoring have an eye-of-the-beholder quality' (p. 295) about them so that benefits for one may be dysfunctional for another in the relationship.

In recent years, there has been discussion of, on the one hand, the view that transference and countertransference are characteristics of the psychoanalytic encounter and are not found outside that arena, and on the other, that transference and countertransference may be found in everyday situations (McAuley, 1989). In this paper we have taken the position that mentoring is a situation in which the ebb and flow of transference and countertransference may be found. In looking at definitions of transference and countertransference there are a number of common threads. De Vries and Miller (1984) suggest that transference occurs when an individual, usually unconsciously, treats a current relationship as though it were an important relationship from the past (p. 8). Phillips (1995) discusses transference as the 'unwitting recreation and repetition of earlier family relationships' (p. 2). Thus when the transference is flowing from mentee to mentor, it could be suggested, the parties are entering a process by which the former can transfer his or her positive or negative affections to the confidant (Symington, 1990); the mentee projects onto the mentor feelings evoked within the mentee. In the mentoring situation, transference is a resource that helps 'the mentee to become aware of themes and situations which are likely to replay, often contrary to the mentee's well being or conscious attention' (O'Brien, 1995, p. 53). Sometimes, as Symington points out, these positive or negative feelings are evoked by the substantive behaviours of the confidant but sometimes these feelings are evoked by a fantasy that the mentee has about the other. Lacan suggests that 'positive transference is when you (the client) have a soft spot for the therapist, and the negative transference is when you have to keep an eye on him/her' (1979, p. 124).

In this sense, both negative transference and positive transference, when they are working for the benefit of the mentee and the mentor, are important resources in developing self-understanding. In the mentoring situation positive transference enables the mentee to develop respect for, and understanding of, the mentor; negative transference enables a degree of useful scepticism to creep in and for the mentee at the appropriate time to assert independence. However, there is another side to the coin. This is when there are dysfunctional elements in the relationship of the mentee to the mentor. Thus positive transference when it is dysfunctional means that there is over-dependence on the mentor; negative transference when it is dysfunctional would mean a desire to attack or destroy the mentor.

The other aspect of the relationship, countertransference, may be seen as the living response to the transference (Racker, 1968, p. 18). It is the mentor's response

to the mentee. However, it is not a mirror image of the transference from the mentee. Because the mentor has his or her own inner life, the evocations in the countertransference can result in responses that are asynchronous with the transference (Klauber, 1986). In traditional psychoanalysis, 'the analyst allows the patient to be sucked up into his outer personality structure' (Symington, 1990, p. 31). Symington suggests that this process of knowing and understanding the other's position enables interpretation to take place. Although the countertransference in the psychoanalytic encounter is more highly charged than in everyday life, the authority vested in the mentor's role invests it with an air of privileged insight. In this sense, then, countertransference may be seen as the response of the mentor to the mentee; in psychoanalytic terms it may be seen as the controlled empathetic response of the analyst to the patient (Klauber, 1986, p. 30). This empathetic response could be either positive, affirming of the other, or it could be 'intense and negative' (Klauber 1986, p. 30)—but either way it is an important resource in helping the client to achieve self-understanding where the analyst is aware of the transference issues as they are occurring, and is able to interpret and communicate them to the client in a manner that the client can understand.

When the countertransference is benign and positive it gives the mentee 'good enough' regard, respects the position of the mentee and is generally supportive in an encouraging manner. However, when the countertransference is positive but dysfunctional the mentor will 'fall in love' with the mentee, will collude with their every word, will not want to separate from him or her. When the countertransference is benign but negative the mentor will disagree with the position of the mentee, will challenge fondly held mindsets, even express well-controlled irritation. When the countertransference is negative and also dysfunctional the mentor will wish to attack or destroy the mentee, and will 'give the mentee a hard time' (but for the, usually unstated, purpose of revenge). O'Brien discusses, by way of example, a transference situation in which the mentee attempts to 'unwittingly coach the mentor to behave' in ways that confirm the mentee's negative self-identification. Here the mentor's countertransference (monitored through close supervision [1]) is a resource that helps examine the relationship and thereby evoke uncomfortable memories that 'might also be replaying in present relationships at work' (O'Brien, 1995, p. 53).

These functional and dysfunctional aspects of positive and negative aspects of transference and countertransference as they occur in the mentoring relationship are summarised in Fig. 1.

The theory of transference and countertransference is not unproblematic. Within the modern tradition of psychoanalysis, most writers see the transference relationship as crucial, the heart of the matter. Therapy can only be successfully resolved when the transference relationship is actually resolved. Indeed Gellner (1985), with rebarbative intent, characterises transference as the 'covenant, the bond, the social cement, the social contract of (the psychoanalytic) movement' (p. 55). Other writers, particularly within the Rogerian tradition, see transference as a phenomenon that is one-way and inappropriate to the realities of the situation—it is an assertion of power by the therapist or mentor. Thus, evocation of the transference

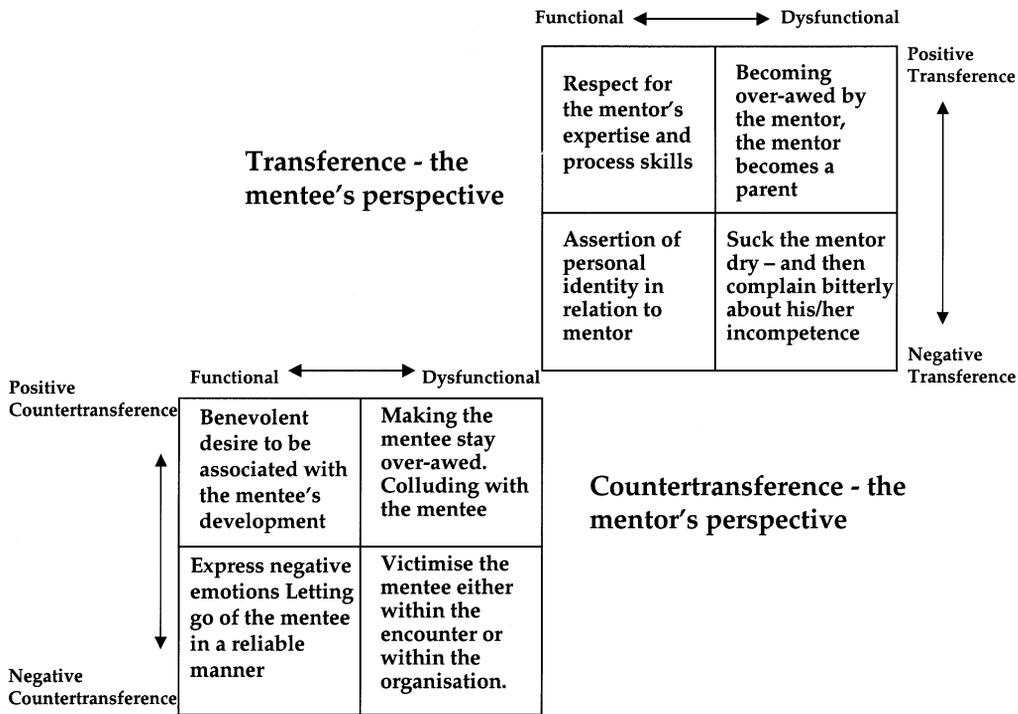


FIG. 1. Transference and countertransference in the mentor-mentee relationship (adapted from McAuley, 1989).

is something to be avoided, to be replaced by a relationship which is an expression of the underlying commonality of experience between two human beings, a feeling of accord which enables the client 'to reduce the tension and fear involved in facing life' (Rogers, 1961, p. 82). In this sense, playing the transference card in the relationship can be seen as playing god, engaging in a confessional ritual in which the client, or mentee, becomes open to victimisation (Webster, 1995, p. 354).

We would suggest, however, that transference is a phenomenon that will not go away, and in the remainder of this article will explore it both in relation to its functional and dysfunctional aspects. This exploration will look at transference as it occurs within the relationship between mentor, mentee and the organisation to cast light on issues of authority embedded in mentoring. We shall then explore issues of the process of mentoring and of the relationships as they are found in the mentoring process.

### The relationship between mentor and mentee and the organisation

It is generally accepted that the relationship between mentor and mentee is rooted in the organisation in which the parties are employed, and that the relationship serves

organisational purposes. Conger (1999) suggests that although the evidence on the effectiveness of formal mentoring programmes is equivocal, formal mentoring may be more cost-effective than executive coaching in the development of middle- and junior-level managers. Aryee and Chay (1994) suggest 'mentoring is a potential strategy that organisations could use to enhance the work commitment of employees' (p. 248). Garvey *et al.* (1996) maintain that 'what we often think of as the personal qualities of the mentor—integrity, judgement, wisdom and self-knowledge—are, to some extent at least, functions of the organisation' (p. 10). The suggestion here is that an organisation which supports mentoring will evoke these qualities in the mentor; and by implication, in an organisation which does not support mentoring, then these qualities will remain latent within its members. A link is also made between mentoring and organisational viability, 'whether this is seen as a matter of competitive advantage, quality of service, corporate longevity or some other criterion' (Garvey *et al.*, 1996, p. 10). A somewhat less benign view is that mentoring can be understood as a managerially driven programme designed to develop the mentee as clones of the desired organisational configuration of the desirable employee (Covaleski *et al.*, 1998).

This process of creating alignment between the purposes of the mentor, the mentee and the organisation requires, it is argued, a number of core characteristics of the mentor. Thus Collin (1979) suggests that in matching the needs of the individual mentee with those of the organisation that:

'the mature man (sic) (the mentor), as he discovers the younger man's capabilities, potentials and inclinations will lead him through the roles which are both appropriate to his apprentice and essential to the company's effective functioning . . . The mentor acts as the leading edge in the process of socialisation in which the individual adapts to the needs and *ambience* of the company whilst retaining his own individuality and thereby achieves his own style of managerial development' (p. 3).

There is however an ambivalence about the degree of affiliation of the mentor to the organisation. Garvey *et al.* (1996) suggest that, 'for the mentoring process to succeed, knowledge of the organisation is of crucial importance . . . You (the mentor) will feel committed to the organisation', although they add that the good mentor is not a 'company man or woman' but that the 'wider perspective, a commitment to underlying ethical values, is good for the mentor; it is also good for the mentee . . .' (p. 12). Furthermore, Aryee *et al.* (1996), in their discussion of the background motivations of mentors found that 'individuals high in organisation-based self-esteem . . . may not appreciate the problems faced by organisational newcomers' (1996, p. 272) and therefore not take up mentoring as an activity. Collin (1979) places the mentor within the informal organisational structure, but at the same time the mentor 'personifies the organisation's psychostructure and acts as the midwife in the process of socialisation'. She sees mentoring as integral to management, but not imposed by 'the formal and conceptual structure of the organisation' (1979, p. 3).

From a transference perspective, the interesting issue is the extent to which the mentor can claim to be detached from and yet integrated into the organisation, and the extent to which the mentee can sceptically understand the mentor's position. The transference issue is that the mentor carries with the role the *attributed authority* of the organisation through the process of projective identification. Although, as we have seen, transference is normally associated with the unconscious evocation of the past in a present relationship, it can also stem from what is happening in the present when confronted by a person perceived to be in an authority position (no matter how benign). The process of projective identification occurs when the subject, here the mentee, creates a fantasy about the relationship with, and the nature of, the other, the mentor, and projects that fantasy onto the other (Stapley, 1996). What we are suggesting is that, given the relationship of the mentor to the organisation, there is an inevitability that there will be, on the part of the mentee, a blurring of the boundaries between the mentor and the organisation.

This ambiguity can be functional (at least for the organisation) in that it enables crucial aspects of mentoring to proceed. Projective identification, when it is positive, can, for example, attribute to the mentor the authority to help the mentee understand what Garvey and Alred (2001) suggest are the elements and aspects of complex organisational situations and to understand the complexity of their own situations. It is also a means by which the mentee can focus on what Townley (1993) suggests is a key purpose of mentoring—the process of tying the self (and being tied) into the norms and values of the organisation. Negative projective identification, on the other hand, can enable the mentee to act out his or her negative fantasies about the organisation, using the mentor as symbolic representation as of the organisation as relatively bad object. That is to say, the mentee treats the work of the mentor with a degree of scepticism and sees the mentor as a representative of an authority system that needs to be treated with a degree of caution and detachment.

At a dysfunctional level, however, on the positive side of projective identification, the mentee can use the situation to create and sustain a narcissistic total engagement (Schwartz, 1990) with the organisation. The mentor is seen as an organisational ideal, the very model of what it is to be successful in the organisation. Dysfunctional negative projective identification occurs where the mentor is seen to symbolise all that is 'totally bad' about the organisation.

### **The mentoring process**

Bennetts (1996a) makes an explicit linkage between the process of mentoring and the counselling relationship, although she is clear that they are not the same undertaking. She cites Rogerian (Rogers, 1961) principles, including empathy with the learner, the ability to be genuine and care openly for the learner and the ability to communicate these benevolent features in the relationship to the learner, as characteristic of informal mentoring relationships. Gibb (1994) makes a distinction

between systematic and process approaches as ends of a continuum of mentoring. In the systematic approach the psychological contract is such that roles and boundaries are clearly established; in the process approach roles and boundaries are negotiated and emergent. In terms of the flow of transference the former is closer to the traditional psychoanalytic setting in that it creates an arena in which the transference flows and the transference issues are there on the table for those who wish to see them. There are, however, features of the situation, in Gibb's research, which militate against this interpersonal richness. Systematic mentoring tends to be based on sporadic meetings and tends to be short-term and action-centred. It is only in process mentoring that the relationship is regular, longer-term and focuses on the personal. However, in process mentoring, transference issues are likely to become muted and even confused during the processes of negotiation and emergence.

There are, however, ways of bridging the systematic and process approaches. Ritchie and Connolly (1993) see an analogy between mentoring and the process of supervision in social work. This clarifies the relationship between the mentor, the mentee and the organisation in that supervision in social work, which is at the core of professional development, is inextricably intertwined with accountability. This illustrates the notion that 'control and development issues are seen as complementary' (1993, p. 272), although there is a dynamic conflict between them. It is an arena in which the transference issues are clear, if attention is paid to them.

Bennetts (1996a) suggests that there are generally three stages to the development of the mentoring relationship. These are initiation, development and maintenance. Kram (1983) suggests that there are also phases of separation and redefinition. These different phases, taken together, have all the characteristics of Lewin's (1951) formulation of unfreezing, movement and refreezing.

At the initiation stage, Bennetts (1996a) suggests that there can be three approaches at play, each of which has its different dynamics. Thus if initiation of the process is through the mentor, the mentor displays 'an accurate insight into the learner's behaviour and world by direct experience from their own life' (p. 2). When the relationship is initiated by the learner, it happened because the person is 'asking for help, either by direct request, or by behaving in ways that drew attention to themselves'. When the relationship is jointly initiated it is through a realisation that the two parties 'had mutual interests' and they began to see each other in a rather different light from their previous experience of each other. This would be sparked off, Bennetts suggests, by 'personal disclosure on the part of the learner or the mentor' (1996a, p. 2). Kram (1983) hints at the transference implications of this initiation phase. The young managers in her study recollected, 'a strong positive fantasy emerges in which the senior manager is admired and respected' (p. 614). There are also premonitions of mirror countertransference as 'a request for assistance or a volunteered criticism of the department is interpreted as proof of the young manager's assertiveness and competence' (p. 616).

At the development stage, Alred *et al.* (1998) analogise the development of the relationship as a dance in which the parties 'dance around the themes of the conversation, getting closer to new learning ... as they go' (p. 311). There are

different phases to this conversation—exploration, led by the mentor, refocusing based on a new understanding on the part of the mentee and movement all generated, the writers suggest, through a non-directive process. In a somewhat more prescriptive tone, Collin (1979) sees it as a process in which ‘the function of the mentor appears to be to inform and guide the novice manager. . . . The mentor often becomes a model to be followed. Later the individual learns to stand upon his own feet and . . . in his time becomes a mentor to a younger man’. Kram (1983) refers to this phase as ‘cultivation’. She suggests that for some mentees, as the boundaries are established, there is not as much in the relationship as they had originally thought. The mentee experiences negative transference and becomes either sceptical of the situation (which could be functional) or actively disparaging of the situation (which is potentially dysfunctional). For other mentees, the ‘relationship is far richer than anticipated’ (p. 617) so that, we would suggest, there is a maintenance of a functional transference relationship that may be for the most part positive but which maintains a useful degree of negative transference. For the mentor, Kram (1983) suggests, the main gains during this phase are ‘empowerment . . . the capacity to support and to nurture . . . to open doors . . . to transmit values and skills’ (p. 617). So the mentoring dance proceeds with a clear leader and follower. Although the process might *technically* be non-directive, it might be suggested that the flow of the transference and countertransference *actually* generates a powerful internal structure as the relationship unfolds.

These transference processes extend into the periods of separation and redefinition. During the separation period there is evidence, at least on the part of the mentee of separation anxiety but also of the growth of autonomy as both mentor and mentee reassess the relationship. When this is working well there is negative transference and negative countertransference working functionally. At the same time, Kram (1983) discusses mentees who found that they needed to return to the mentor, but (perhaps more ominously from a perspective of power) that there were some mentors who ‘resist the separation by blocking promotional moves’ (p. 619). The crucial element here, as far as the mentor is concerned, is that he or she engages in functional negative countertransference that places a distance between the mentor and the mentee.

### **What the parties can gain from the relationship, transferentially and countertransferentially speaking**

Bennetts (1996a) characterises a traditional mentoring relationship as an ‘intimate learning relationship which appears to happen naturally and which occurs in any life setting’ (p. 2), although most writers would see the relationship as having boundaries. There are a number of general issues that appear in the relationship. Alred *et al.* (1998) suggest that the relationship and shared understanding between mentor and mentee ‘enable the conversation to be respectful and purposeful’ (p. 312).

With a closer lens, aspects of the relationship may be seen from the perspective of the mentor and the mentee. The mentor is generally characterised as a person who is older than the mentee. Levinson *et al.* (1974), for example, maintain that an age difference of 15–18 years is critically important in the context of continuing adult development. Garvey *et al.* (1996) suggest that the motivation of the mentor to take on the role comes out of ‘helpful relationships in their own past’ (p. 11), and that, when a person becomes a mentor, there will be feelings of being ‘flattered ... a form of recognition that another has faith in you and feels that you have something to offer’ (p. 11). Bennett suggests that from the mentor’s point-of-view, entering into a fruitful relationship is ‘the ultimate aim of their learning cycle’ and that it provides a ‘*raison d’être*, a sense of achievement, the feeling of handing on a torch’.

In terms of the implications for countertransference issues between the mentor and the mentee there are significant issues. The development of self-esteem and the level of responsibility involved in the relationship represent an appeal to the narcissistic aspects of the self. The roots of narcissistic pressures, according to Freudian theory, lie within childhood paradoxes of, on the one hand, encouragement and growth, and on the other, frustration and feelings of impotence so that imbalances between these features will be experienced as psychologically damaging (Kets De Vries, 1993). In this sense, narcissism can be seen as ‘essentially a defense against aggressive impulses rather than self-love’ (Lasch, 1980). In a general way, Kets de Vries suggests, ‘a certain amount of narcissistic behavior may be necessary for organizational success ... a moderate dose contributes to effective organizational functioning. A leader’s theatrical quality, confidence and purposefulness can be contagious. ... (T)hese executives let their followers share their vision and expertise ...’ (Kets De Vries, 1993, p. 35). These are characteristics that could be aligned to the behaviour of the mentor working actively with the mentee; the countertransference in the relationship is generally benign.

This emphasis on the benign and positive can, however, be problematic. Watson and Clark (1984), cited in Aryee *et al.*, (1996) suggest that the ‘tendency to experience negative and positive affect reflects a stable, ongoing disposition’ (1996, p. 263) where the term affect refers to the general emotional state of the person, their propensity to either experience the world in a positive, approachable social sort of way or in a rather more negative, isolated manner. Aryee *et al.* (1996) demonstrate that people with a positive affect are more likely to be motivated towards taking on a mentoring role. This means, in terms of their countertransference, that what they are likely to pick up from the mentee are those experiences that are positive, and if the mentee is acting in a persistently negative manner the impulse in the countertransference from the mentor would be to offer help as ‘the benign parent’ (p. 19). The lesson from psychoanalysis is that ‘when the countertransference is overwhelmingly empathic in nature, it reduces the objectivity of the analyst’s thought processes’ (Issacharoff, 1984, p. 94). By denying the benign negative aspects of affect in the countertransference, the mentee does not have available a helpful critical stance in relation to issues brought to the meeting.

However, within this relationship there are also the possibilities for deeper levels of dysfunction. In the psychoanalytic encounter, Fromm (1980) pointed to the

pervasive danger for the analyst of falling prey to his or her own narcissistic impulses. Without suggesting that the situation between the analyst and the mentor is the same, there are interesting analogies. At an individual (although socially sanctioned) level, one of the consequences of narcissistic aspects of the personality is the tendency to 'retreat into a world of their own' (Kets De Vries, 1993, p. 94). The possibility for narcissistic dramatisation of the self, in the countertransference, potentially lies in an aspect of the character of the mentor that is commented on in the literature. It is claimed that one of the key motivations for becoming a mentor is altruism (Aryee *et al.*, 1996). Psychoanalytic thought tends to be suspicious of claims to altruism. It can be seen as a narcissistic response to anxiety about the self such that 'one's own wishes are made over to other people and one becomes devoted to getting gratifications from others instead of oneself' (Guntrip, 1982, p. 109). And it may be that in the process of gaining a sense of self in this way one comes to believe in one's altruistic omnipotence—that one's altruism entitles the self to be the guide through all the mentee's troubled waters. Kram (1983), obliquely, provides evidence for this feeling of omnipotence. She discusses some mentors who found it very difficult to separate from their mentees. These were, characteristically, senior managers whose own opportunities for promotion had become blocked. They projected onto their mentees this trouble—they would suggest that the mentees themselves would not gain promotion and, as a self-fulfilling prophecy, delayed structural separation. In a paradoxical way, the mentor becomes all that he/she wishes not to be—'myopic, self-opinionated, and not given to soliciting or accepting advice from others' (Kets De Vries, 1993, p. 94)—whilst still believing in their own altruism.

These narcissistic impulses, both functional and dysfunctional, may also be seen from the perspective of the transference in the relationship. De Vries and Miller discuss two manifestations of positive transference, both of which may be seen as possibilities in the mentoring encounter. Of the positive transference, they write of idealising transference. Applied to a mentoring relationship, a mentee would recreate an imagined wonderful past by having a relationship with a mentor who is seen to be omnipotent and powerful. They also discuss the phenomenon of mirror transference, in which a mentee would recreate an imagined wonderful past by having a relationship with a mentor who recreates an image of the mentee's self as perfect and all-powerful.

These kinds of issues do not figure to any great extent in the mentoring literature; they remain, we argue, the ghost in the process. However, there are exceptions. For example, Bennetts (1996b), on the basis of her study of mentoring relationships in organisational settings, found that respondents 'described the overriding emotion within the relationship as one which ranged from deep affection, warmth and intimacy; to one of love'. For some the word 'love' was used in an holistic way; for some it was used as part of their spiritual philosophy; but for others it was a mixture of both plus a strong emotional attachment which led to being 'in love' (p. 10). From a transference perspective, falling in love represents a regression to a childhood state so that 'when we fall in love we are remembering how to fall in love. And by retrieving these earlier versions of ourselves we achieve a kind of

visionary competence' (Phillips, 1994, p. 39). Phillips suggests, 'falling in love is a problem of knowledge ... (F)alling in love is not a good way of getting to know someone. Psychoanalysis offers us instead the romance of disillusionment ... a more realistic appreciation of the self and the other person' (1994, p. 40). An understanding of the transference process would assist development of both positive and negative aspects of these emotional states as they occur in mentoring relationships.

### **Concluding comment**

It has been commented that interest in the radical exploration of organisation and management known as Critical Theory lies uneasily between the 'promotion and development of more humane forms of management', and 'a more or less complete disengagement with managerial practice' (Fournier & Grey, 2000). Psychoanalysis has been characterised by Habermas (1987) as an example of Critical Theory in action. It recognises 'neurotic symptoms' that cause disruption through, for example, the language games in which members of an organisation can engage. It also helps the member become aware of the repression contained within the language in use.

What we have argued in this paper is that the ambivalence in mentoring—the manner in which it is poised between more humane organisational practice but also supports the notion of management—generates a number of tensions and, further, that an understanding of the processes of transference would enable better understanding of these tensions. O'Brien (1995) suggests that understanding of transference theory can be used in individual mentoring to 'yield substantial benefits in the area of the mentee's life. In the work arena, patterns of troubled relationships with bosses, peers, and team members, can be transformed. Such is the substance of culture transformation' (p. 53). This seems to suggest that culture change starts from the individual, and that the organisation is in some sense neutral. This view is problematic in the sense that individual change and organisational change need to be in alignment (Senge, 1990).

Habermas suggests that awareness is not enough; there is also a need for the person to prepare for systemic action. In Critical Theory the crucial matter is to be able to make causal connections between different neurotic activities of the client system (individual, organisational and social) through reference to a general theory of neurosis. From a mentoring perspective this suggests a somewhat deeper agenda. It involves the ability of the mentor to engage with the mentee in a deeper discussion of organisational and personal dysfunction than is generally the case in what is characterised as a benign encounter.

### **Note**

- [1] The mentors discussed by O'Brien are external to the organisation in which they undertake their work. They are 'typically masters level counsellors, counselling psychologists, or psychotherapists, with dual business qualifications and experience' (1995, p. 52) who also undertake regular supervision and training.

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