

Are you my mother? Transference more pronounced when we are tired

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Extending the logic from existing research showing that individuals exhibited more stereotypic biases at a non-optimal time of day (i.e., in the morning for evening types and in the evening for morning types,) Kruglanski and Pierro examined the occurrence of transference in participants' as related to their circadian rhythm.

Sigmund Freud hailed the phenomenon of transference as fundamental to the process of dynamic psychotherapy. Freud depicted transference as a false connection between patient's memories of a past relationship and the therapeutic context. He noted it as an integral part in the psychoanalytic cure.

New theories present a very different interpretation of transference. In that, it transcends the therapeutic context and constitutes part and parcel of everyday social perception. Much like stereotypes, mental representations of significant others may be activated from memory and applied to new people that you meet who resemble someone you know.

Psychodynamic theories argue that transference is an intense, resource-demanding process, but psychologists Arie Kruglanski, University of Maryland, and Antonio Pierro, University of Rome "La Sapienza," suggest that transference is more likely to occur when an individual's energy resources are low, rather than abundant.

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First, the participants completed a scale to assess “morningness” and were then asked to name, visualize, and describe a current or past significant other. They returned two weeks later either to a randomly assigned morning or evening session. Those categorized as morning people were at a circadian mismatch when they were assigned to the evening session as were evening people at the morning session.

The results, which appear in the March issue of *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, show that morning people in the evening, and evening people in the morning exhibited the transference effect to a greater extent than folks at their circadian best. These people may not be at their most alert state, so they tend to rely on an automatically activated image and fail to notice the differences between the new individual and their significant other.

The authors suggest that their results cast doubt on the theory that paints transference as an energy-intensive phenomenon. Kruglanski and Pierro suggest that future research will focus on integrating the psychoanalytic and the social cognitive approaches to understanding transference.

Source: Association for Psychological Science

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