

Abstract:

Through a phenomenological approach 9 female co-researchers and the researcher gained a deeper understanding of how shame influences the lives of black, immigrant and refugee women in Norway. The research suggests that shame does not only occur in the family setting, but is also a significant factor in their meeting with society at large. Their stories are about a culture that resists integration and a white majority society that continuously judges them because of their colour of skin, their appearances and their so-called alien cultures. They feel rejected, shamed and downgraded. The research also shows how “whiteness” is an invisible premise, the background of decisions and shaming messages. The contributions of the white people are celebrated, while the achievements of the black citizens remain mostly invisible and are even questioned.

By understanding these ground conditions the practice of Gestalt can offer support through the dialogical approach of truly valuing, accepting and appreciating the uniqueness and otherness, the qualities and creative adjustment of each individual. The research suggests that Gestalt psychotherapy, offering an I-thou attitude and adopting a field perspective, was experienced by participants as beneficial.

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