

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation critically explores the integrative psychotherapists' subjective experience and processing of reactive countertransference and projective identification. It engages with relevant scholarly literature and resources pertaining to these concepts and in the light of this engages in phenomenological research to establish the experiences of integrative psychotherapists' experiences of reactive countertransference and projective identification. Having established the depth and nature of such experiences the dissertation moves on to analyse the impact of these experiences on the psychotherapist. Using the data gathered in field work in the form of semi-structured interviews, it analyses the responses of psychotherapists to the impact of reactive countertransference and projective identification. It establishes the primarily negative impact of these experiences on the psychotherapist and identifies tools and mechanisms that individuals have developed to process and deal with this impact. The research very interestingly suggests overwhelmingly that the primary source of support for psychotherapists experiencing reactive countertransference and projective identification is the supervisor. This, then, raises demanding questions about the way in which beginner therapists are trained and prepared for experiences such as reactive countertransference and projective identification. It also reinforces the crucial role that the supervisor plays in the life and work of the therapist both in their professional and private lives.

The motivation for the research project underlying the dissertation arises from my own subjective, but confusing experience of projective identification as a beginner therapist, and the conflicting advice that I received. The purpose of the dissertation is to suggest ways in which integrative psychotherapists might be better equipped to

deal with the impact of experiences of reactive countertransference and projective identification.