

## **Abstract**

The study explored how individuals experience the concept of space from the perspectives of psychotherapy clients and practitioners. The notion of space in different therapeutic traditions was explored and Gestalt literature reviewed.

A phenomenological method was used to explore what facilitated or inhibited a sense of space within the therapeutic relationship. Interviews were held with 12 participants. Transcripts were analysed using McLeod's (2001) synthesis of the Colaizzi (1978) method. The overarching theme concerned the therapeutic relationship. This encompassed sub-themes of: the physical environment, safety, support and challenge, attunement, life themes, self regulation, shame, and the dialogic attitude. Intrinsic to all themes was the embodied experience.

Recommendations were made, that therapists take account of the importance of the lived experience of space, within the frame of a dialogic relationship. Monitoring the phenomenology of the ongoing process, being proactive in creating conditions for safety and challenge in the therapeutic relationship and the provision of a comfortable physical space in which to practice therapy were proposed as topics for therapist reflection.