

ABSTRACT

The main thrust of this study was to understand the concept of whiteness as a phenomenon, to ascertain the experience of the white Gestalt psychotherapist when working with African Caribbean clients. A Phenomenological qualitative research approach was undertaken with 6 participants.

The study reveals that very little is written on the subject of whiteness in psychotherapy and in Gestalt psychotherapy literature. A search was conducted in the field of psychology and sociology with literature support available from cross-cultural counselling psychoanalytical theory.

Findings in this study show that it is uncomfortable for white Gestalt therapists to acknowledge their whiteness, and this is two folds, the first is that whiteness is embedded in an imperialist attitude, and has over the years influenced the development of the western world. The second is generational shame which is traumatic for white trainees and qualified therapist. These findings also address the need for an open dialogue around this issue for white psychotherapist as there is confusion when working clinically with client's about the process of bracketing. Further research is suggested to see whether training adequately supports black and white therapist to work with diverse groups.

The conclusion to this study identifies a need for a discussion and debate within the Gestalt Community on this subject.