

Raids on the inarticulate: A group's engagement with race

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This paper is dedicated to the memory of Hilda Croxford, our dear colleague and friend, and a founding member of the group. Hilda died very suddenly just before final submission of this paper. Her vital spirit, her curiosity and playfulness, her openness to engagement and her deep capacity for humility and compassion are woven into the essence of our group. There are no words to express how much she will be missed.

Abstract

This paper describes the experience of a group of South African clinicians who have met monthly since 2011 to engage with race as it pertains to our clinical contexts, our identities as clinicians and, inevitably, our private selves. Written from a relational psychoanalytic perspective, the paper is contextualised within the prevailing socio-political climate and the local profession of psychoanalytic practice. With the aim of crafting a collaborative paper, individual group members were asked to reflect on their experience of the group in order to distil dominant themes and processes. What became evident through the collation of these reflections was a shared experience of various manifestations of a third position which, it is suggested, have facilitated reflective functioning, allowing the group to traverse multiple iterations of rupture and repair. The paper suggests that it is the repeated processes of misrecognition and rupture and subsequent repair and mutual recognition, that largely account for the group's longevity, continuity and challenging generativity. The paper highlights the potency of thirdness in facilitating thinking about race through dialogue. However, the limitations and fragility of the group and its process in the context of the restless and fractured socio-political landscape of contemporary South Africa are also acknowledged.