

# **Talk of whiteness: A psychosocial analysis of constructions of race amongst white novice clinical psychologists in South Africa**

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## **Abstract**

This paper is concerned with the significance of raced experience, and whiteness in particular, as one facet of the emerging identities of trainee clinical psychologists in South Africa, and with adding to the existing literature in this area from a psychosocial perspective. This psychosocial perspective is broadly informed by social constructionism and psychoanalytic thinking reflecting a growing psychoanalytic interest in the intra- as well as inter-personal significance of socio-political processes. As part of this psychoanalytic emphasis, we employ the concept of mentalization to think about modes of psychic experience, in relation to race, as facilitated by different kinds of discursive practices or particular ways of talking. Analysing an interview encounter with a white trainee clinical psychologist highlights a discourse of 'racial innocence', which constructs the speaker as being free of racial enculturation, eliding a broader social context.