

Navigating murky waters: Black South African supervisees reflecting on finding voice and space in psychotherapy supervision

Thabiso Ramohlola and Carol Long

University of the Witwatersrand

Abstract

This paper explores the supervision experiences of Black South African psychotherapy supervisees and the supervision relationship in relation to culture and diversity. The limited literature on the experiences of Black supervisees, and the limited psychoanalytic literature on culture and diversity in supervision, suggest both the transformative and destructive potential of supervision. Interview conversations were conducted with nine Black supervisees and analysed through a psychoanalytic lens. Based on these interview conversations, we offer an analysis of their process of 'navigating murky waters'. Four processes were foregrounded: finding or losing their voice, the supervisor's openness to navigating the terrain, feelings of disillusionment if conversations were not invited, and despair in the face of toxic power dynamics. We propose a Winnicottian model of supervision as potential space in order to foster acknowledgement of race and culture in supervision. Implications for a decolonial supervision practice are explored.