

**The White British Counselling Psychologist:  
Personal and Professional Experiences of  
Whiteness. A Hermeneutic Phenomenological  
Approach.**

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## Abstract

Practitioner psychologists are 90% White (Moore et al., 2020) and work in contexts where there is evidence of 'racial' disparities in mental health and psychological service provision towards racialised ethnic minority groups\*. Schooley et al., (2019) propose that counselling psychologists can help to dismantle 'racial' oppression through the psychological examination of Whiteness. Whiteness appears to have been widely explored in the multi-disciplinary and international counselling psychology literature. Exploring the lived experience of Whiteness for qualified White British counselling psychologists may offer new insight into this complex phenomenon and make a tentative contribution to advancing scholarship in this area. The current study aimed to explore the personal and professional lived experiences of a group of White British counselling psychologists. It sought to understand how contributors constructed, understood and made meaning from the phenomenon of Whiteness. Six counselling psychologists who self-identified as White British took part in semi-structured interviews, which were transcribed and analysed utilising hermeneutic phenomenological analysis inspired by Max van Manen.

The analysis revealed four themes: Whiteness is a bypass, Whiteness is a vessel, Whiteness is a trap, and Whiteness is a conditional home. The results suggest essential aspects of the lived experience of Whiteness for this group of contributors include the centrality of White privilege, an ambiguous understanding of Whiteness, emotional discomfort, uncertainty about how to speak or act 'racial' issues, operation within a racialised paradigm, and interaction with intersectional aspects of identity. Clinical implications of the findings are discussed, including how existing psychological frameworks may be applied and suggestions for how to respond to Whiteness in professional practice. The findings may serve as a point of further exploration, discussion, and action around the topic of Whiteness within the field of counselling psychology in Britain and associated disciplines.

\*Term formulated by the author

**For Shay**

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## **Abbreviations**

ADP Anti-Discriminatory Practice

BPS British Psychological Society

CBT Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy

COBRA Colour Blind Racial Attitude

CoP Counselling Psychology

DCoP Division of Counselling Psychology

CWS Critical Whiteness Studies

EDI Equality, Difference and Diversity

HPA Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis

IPA Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

PCRW Psychological Cost of Racism to Whites

UEL University of East London

WRI White Racial Identity

## **Symbols**

XX – Identifying data omitted



# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **1.1 Overview**

This chapter presents the context for the current study. A rationale for the chosen terminology will be presented along with a discussion of its inherent limitations. The concepts of 'race' will be introduced by drawing on Black scholars' critique of 'racial' inequality to contextualise the study of Whiteness within its historical psycho-socio-political origins and frame the study of Whiteness as a response. The purpose of the current study and the intended audience will be clarified. The author's positionality, including influences and motivations, will be discussed and a commitment to reflexivity will be established. The chapter closes with a consideration of studying Whiteness within the context of a 'cancel' culture.

## **1.2 Preamble**

Counselling psychologists cannot separate themselves from the historical, social, political, and economic contexts in which they live and work (Strawbridge & Woolfe, 1996). During the summer of 2020, following events in the United States including the high-profile murders of several African American people and the subsequent rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, 'race' related topics seemed to come to the fore in the UK, both in the public sphere and within the psychological community. However, such issues are not new or specific to the US. Events including the Windrush scandal (BBC News, 2020), a significant 'racial' disparity in COVID-19 epidemic related deaths (Office for National Statistics, 2020) and overwhelming mortality rates for Black people during childbirth (Knight et al., 2022) highlight that British counselling psychologists work within a context of 'racial' disparity. It is this disparity and the CoP response to it that inspired the current study's focus on Whiteness.

## **1.3 A note on terminology**

Before proceeding further, it is important to discuss my chosen terminology. I will use single quotation marks when using the term 'race' or 'racial' throughout this

dissertation to acknowledge the perspective that 'race' is a social construction. I do not to reify 'race' as a 'real' notion but to use language consistent with the literature I am drawing from. The term 'White' will be utilised to describe people who have been racialised as White (capitalised to denote its use as a noun rather than an adjective). Although White ethnic minorities such as Travellers, Roma and Gypsy communities are classed as White in demographic terms, I want to acknowledge from the outset the unique experience of those who experience oppression around their ethnic identities despite their seemingly White skin.

In choosing a term to describe people who have been racialised as 'other than White'. I considered the term 'Black' in its political sense to describe anyone discriminated against based on their ethnicity. However, this can include White groups such as the White Irish or White Jewish who may not always be described this way in research data on 'non-White' populations. I also considered the term 'People of a Global Majority' (PoGM) and although there is more statistical accuracy in this term, it does not seem to capture the essence of inhabiting a relative ethnic minority in a Western context. The term 'Black and Asian ethnic minorities' (BAME) has long been contested and is generally considered defunct. The terms 'People of Colour' (POC) or 'Black and indigenous people of colour' (BIPOC) may imply that White people are 'colourless' and perpetuate Whiteness as the absent norm. Crucially, none of these options emphasise the social processes of racialisation. Therefore, after much consideration, I have chosen to utilise the term 'racialised ethnic minority' (REM).

This dissertation is written from a constructivist, hermeneutic phenomenological position and will utilise the first-person voice when discussing my positionality and impact on the research process. In keeping with this position, I will refer to the individuals who participated in the current study as 'contributors' to emphasise a collaborative attitude to uncovering phenomena. The dissertation draws on research from various paradigms, some of which make general statements about White and REM groups. Whilst the language utilised will reflect the paradigm of whichever piece of research is being referenced, from my phenomenological position, it is important to acknowledge that neither of these groups is homogenous and individual lived experiences vary.

## 1.4 The invention of 'race' and the evolution of Whiteness

The essentially 'invisible' nature of Whiteness means that it is important to view the creation of 'race' and the evolution of Whiteness through a 'Black gaze', a gaze that White people have historically attempted to control (hooks, 1992). For this reason, the following section draws largely on the scholarship of REM authors to illustrate how Whiteness evolved to bolster the empty category of 'race' to create, justify and sustain 'racial' inequality.

'Race' is a social construct with no biological basis that originates from White supremacy – the unfounded ideology that White people are superior and REM people are inferior by comparison (Guess, 2006; Haeny et al. 2021). Guess (2006) purported that the meaning of 'race' depends largely upon the meaning of Whiteness and its significance in mediating social interaction and social organisation between White and REM people. Any attempt to define the category of 'race' (physiology) from culture (behaviour and beliefs) and ethnicity (an internal sense of belonging) ultimately results in theoretical collapse as the terms invariably overlap and a meaningful theoretical distinction cannot be maintained (Dalal, 2006). Any distinction appears to rest primarily in 'identity' investments and whether a group is being defined from the outside (as with 'race') or from the inside (as with ethnicity and culture) (Dalal, 1993). The three terms are often utilised interchangeably in the literature. Helms (1994) argued that imprecise definitions have contributed to equivocal theoretical conceptualisations, methodological ambiguities, and practitioner confusion.

Dalal (1993, 2006) challenged the concept of 'race' as a fixed objective category and asserted that it only makes sense in the context of racism. The phenomena of 'race' and racism are dynamic psycho-socio-political processes borne out of power relations and the human need to attach and belong. When considering why some differences between groups are emphasised whilst others are considered less meaningful, Dalal (2006) theorised that social categories of identity and belonging are formed in two fundamental ways: (1) to belong to a group, it is necessary that there is another group not to belong to and (2) only some may belong to the group, others are not allowed to belong. Without these two conditions, the 'us' group is meaningless and would encompass everyone. Therefore, to attach and belong, one must negate, and to

include, one must exclude. As it is impossible to identify the essence of any particular 'us', the sense of 'us' must be continually bolstered by comparisons with the 'not us', despite there being no homogeneity there either. This gives rise to an active and continuous process of estrangement, naming and amplifying differences and diminishing similarities so that the lines between categories do not blur.

Dalal (2006) argued that due to the emptiness and fluidity of 'race' as a social category, it had to be sustained using emotional mechanisms to create absolute separation and distance. The 'us' were idealised (we are good and only good) whilst the 'not us' were denigrated (they are bad and only bad). Colonisers utilised myths, phantasies, and ideologies to divide themselves from the colonised. Colour was the primary visual signifier used for this distinction between 'us' and 'them' (Dalal, 1993). Around the seventeenth century, 'races' had come to be routinely attached to the words *Black* and *White*, words that had already come to bear negative and positive connotations, e.g. the Bubonic Plague was known as The *Black* Death. Political categories of Black and White became powerful tools of inclusion and exclusion. Labelling people as 'Black' was, therefore, an act of othering them and 'race' is conversely the symptom of and not the cause of racism. (Dalal, 2006). Europeans were conversely 'Whitened' to solidify this fallacy (Dalal, 1993).

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the White ruling class were growing concerned by a perceived threat to their power and elevated position in society due to the growing alliances that they perceived between 'poor White'<sup>1</sup> people and Black people (Du Bois, 1935). Whiteness was utilised as a 'gold standard' of measurement to justify the oppression and domination of anyone considered inferior (Zevallos, 2017). Du Bois (1935) stated that 'compensatory Whiteness' was devised to serve as a 'public and psychological wage' to 'compensate' 'poor Whites' by providing them with the metaphorical payment of a social status not conferred to their REM counterparts. This valuable social status was specifically bound to their categorisation as 'not black'. To give Whiteness value, Blackness was concertedly devalued, and anti-Black racism was established as a key tool in capitalist social control (Myers, 2019).

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'poor White' is used as it appears in the original writings of Du Bois (1935) to describe citizens exploited by the mechanisms of capitalism.

## 1.5 Racism

Haeny et al. (2021) define racism as a system of beliefs (racial prejudices), practices (racial discrimination) and policies grounded in the idea of 'race' that function to advantage people with historical power (White people). Whiteness is therefore at the centre of the problem of racism (Applebaum, 2016). Fanon (1986) asserted that racism occurs at a physical and spatial level (i.e. segregated living areas), but also at the level of culture, morality, and psychology and that it is this dynamic approach of racism that makes it so enduring and resilient to change. If it fails at one level, it can be proposed again at another, in a self-perpetuating, self-rationalising and self-justifying cycle. The logic of this continual splitting and separation of 'racial' groups (and their respective associations) is that the values and cultures of the two groups appear to be hopelessly irreconcilable, and thus, the racism created through this flawed sense of difference is sustained. The racialised and dehumanised Other is positioned as immoral, and a buffer of hatred, disgust, and contempt is created and maintained. This use of 'racial' categorisation coincided with the advent of the Age of Imperialism and served as a basis to justify the transatlantic slave trade (Berthold, 2010). Examples of contemporary racism range from microaggressions (degrading and sometimes unintentional 'racial' slights that serve to reinforce the power imbalances between 'racial' groups) (Sue, 2010a, 2010b) to institutional racism (routine processes, procedures and associated actions that negatively impact on the experiences of REM people within institutions (Nazroo et al., 2020)).

Our experience with arbitrary lines of difference is arguably not with the perceived difference itself, but with the function that the differentiation is being employed to perform i.e. to create a divide and enforce a power dynamic. Racism is, therefore, the creation and continued use of 'race' as an activating or organising principle. Dalal (2006) proposed the term 'racialisation' to capture the continual action and cooperation required for this dynamic process to endure as an alternative to the passivity implied in the terms of 'race' or 'racism'. Whether labelled racism or racialisation or othering, the activity is, at its essence, a process of dehumanisation. Through psychosocial developmental processes of attachment and introjection, we imbibe and are constrained by the racialised world that we inhabit so our psyches and sense of self also become racialised. We reproduce and sustain the processes of

racialisation inherent in the attitudes, beliefs, power relationships, discourses, and ways of thinking that we are born into, even if we do not mean to (Dalal, 2006). Nobody is outside of the process of racialisation produced through global colonial Whiteness. However, the experience is fundamentally and systemically different for those who are racialised outside of normative Whiteness (Hunter, 2021).

## **1.6 Psychological mechanisms of Whiteness**

Fanon (1986) bridged the political and psychological study of 'race' and racism by utilising psychological concepts to subject forms of power/racism to critique so that they can be better understood and more effectively challenged. Fanon (1986) exposed the 'myth of Blackness' (and the oppositional category of Whiteness) as the political creation of colonial and post-colonial contexts with the sole purpose of acting as a vessel for racist representations, emotions, and values inherent in a pervasive and systematic derogatory image of Blackness. Fanon (1986) proposed that within colonial contexts, the coloniser and the colonised exist within a psycho-socio-existential complex whereby an 'anxiety of Whiteness' is denied and transferred onto the Black Other, creating a 'neurosis of Blackness'. The psychological mechanisms of an anxiety of Whiteness include: externalising undesired aspects of the self onto the 'racial' other and averting feelings of guilt about the treatment of a racial grouping by blaming them for the wrongdoing done unto them (scapegoating and projection), feelings of irrational fear and paranoid anxiety in response to an exaggerated perceived threat of the 'racial' Other (phobia) the irrational, consistent belief that one is being systematically persecuted or attacked by the Other (paranoia), the identification of a highly valued trait perceived to be inherent in the 'racial' other that cultivates jealousy, fear and hate (ambivalence) and the reduction of the 'racial' Other to caricatures (stereotyping).

In response to being the receptacle for White anxiety within the context of distorted psycho-socio-political conditions and power relations, Fanon (1986) proposed that the 'racial' Other (for whom internalised racism has the potential to become a mode of self-understanding) develops a 'neurosis of Blackness' – the desire to become White (to attain the level of humanity accorded to Whites). As Blackness is objectified as something bad, the Black individual, with a sense of their own goodness, takes on the subjectivity of Whiteness (understands themselves to be morally White and views

Blackness through a White lens). This internalisation of racism and moral Whiteness, however, only serves to continuously affirm one's visible Blackness, resulting in a painful and unending juxtaposition. Fanon's (1986) critique provided the space for an alternative, positive Black identity and challenged the concept of White identity formation (as Whiteness is just as contestable as Blackness). This challenge disturbs and makes perpetually uncertain what it means to identify as White (Hunter, 2021). Although Fanon's analysis is principally focused on the colonial context, it is still relevant when appraising post-colonial periods as they are never fully separate from their colonial past (Hook, 2004a).

### **1.7 Purpose of the current study**

Counselling psychologists in the UK work in settings where REM people access talking therapies at lower rates (Das-Munshie et al., 2018; Mercer et al. 2018), report more negative experiences of therapy (Crawford et al. 2016), have higher attrition rates (Baker, 2018; Beck & Naz, 2019; Lawton et al., 2021; Maura & de Mamani, 2007; Swift & Greenberg, 2012), are more likely to get diagnosed, sectioned and hospitalised with serious mental health problems (Barnett et al., 2019; Fearon et al, 2006; Gajwani et al., 2016; Kirkbride et al., 2010; McManus et al. 2016; Mental Health Foundation, 2019; Perkins & Repper, 2020; Ridley, 1995), spend longer periods in inpatient settings (CHAI, 2007), are more likely to be given pharmacological over psychological treatment (Fernando, 2017; Lawton et al., 2021), obtain poorer outcomes (Baker, 2018; Lawton et al., 2021) and, are under-represented in primary care services and over-represented in secondary care and forensic services (Lammy, 2017). Lawton et al., (2021) stated that some health disadvantages have become accepted as intrinsic to ethnicity based on biased assumptions about cultural or genetic weakness whilst failing to acknowledge the impact of socioeconomic inequality, ethnic discrimination, and generational trauma. A systematic review by FitzGerald & Hurst (2017) reported that racism, prejudice, and racial stereotyping in their various forms impact REM service users' sense of psychological safety in healthcare settings. Such figures present not only an axiological crisis, but a legal one as 'race' based discrimination is unlawful (Equality Act, 2010).

The above figures are compounded by research undertaken by REM psychologists (both trainee and qualified) that presents psychology as a hostile environment to work in including difficulties bringing 'race' related issues or concerns about racism to White colleagues (Addai et al., 2019; Daloye, 2022; Dhillon-Stevens, 2011; Prajapati et al., 2019; Tinsley-Jones, 2001). Such experiences extend to counselling psychology specifically (Constantine et al., 2008, Ramirez, 2020; Wang et al. 2019), conflicting with the discipline's espoused emphasis on culturally informed practice, social justice, and a critical approach to prejudice and discrimination (Cooper, 2009; Martin, 2010).

The discourse on 'race' in psychology and wider society appears to be changing, becoming less of a niche area of interest, and more openly discussed as evidenced in the CEO of the British Psychological Society's (BPS) criticism about the organisation being institutionally racist (Bajwa, 2020) and the contrasting claim by the governmental Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report (2021) that the UK is not institutionally racist (a claim that has been staunchly contested by the United Nations (Day et al., 2021)). This change in discourse, however, does not seem to have been accompanied by any wider guidance within psychological policy on how to effectively identify and manage 'race' related issues in training or practice. Ade-Serrano and Nkansa-Dwamena (2016) stated that limited discussions around 'race' in the British CoP community may be attributed to possible discomfort and minimising of its importance. Moller (2011) criticised British CoP for lacking a distinct identity and argued that committing to the agenda of diversity would be of benefit not only to the individuals that the profession seeks to serve but also to the profession itself through the creation of a strong platform to critique mainstream psychology, a socially relevant research focus, and an area of special expertise that would increase employability.

The BPS 2021-2022 Strategic Framework (BPS, 2021) made a commitment to empowering members to eradicate institutional racism and systemic bias towards marginalised groups at all levels of the organisation and vowed to challenge discriminatory practices in wider society. However, this framework offered no practical guidance on how to mount such a challenge and did not reference the examination of Whiteness as a part of this effort. This absence is also replicated in the BPS Division of Counselling Psychology (DCoP) 2021-2023 Strategic Plan (BPS, 2021) and the BPS DCoP Strategic Objectives 2024-2025 (BPS, 2024). Despite the articulation of



value statements around equality diversity, and inclusion (EDI) the DCoP has not published any literature on 'race' since a collection of articles on 'race', culture, and diversity in 2017 (Ade-Serrano et al., 2017) and few studies relating to Whiteness are evident in the profession's key journals. It is also noticeable that there is currently no available data regarding the demographics of qualified counselling psychologists or who is applying for training. Moller (2011) emphasised that the lack of effort to collate this data is concerning.

The psychological study of Whiteness has been identified as a key tool in addressing 'racial' oppression (Schooley et al., 2019), and yet, the response within the discipline of CoP has been limited (Helms, 2017). A Black feminist perspective on White silence towards 'race' related issues is that Whiteness has made itself invisible to White people who, in turn, can safely imagine that they are invisible to Black people (hooks, 1992). Whiteness does not need to be seen because it is the norm and requires no explanation. There is no need for White people to be self-aware or aware of how the Other may view them, no need to know what it means to be White, no need to see how they are recreating the status quo or to consider the consequences of this non-recognition (hooks, 1992). hooks (1992) highlighted that if progressive White people cannot 'see' Whiteness or how we reproduce it then this has serious ramifications for how 'racial' politics operate elsewhere.

Fanon (1986) asserted that the topic of Whiteness is multi-faceted and, therefore, needs to be approached from multiple angles. Exploring Whiteness from the perspective of those racialised as White is important because 90% of practitioner psychologists in the UK are White (Moore et al., 2020) and yet this position appears to be the most absent from the literature. The purpose of studying the phenomenon from this angle is not to centralise the White experience, suggest that a White perspective is the most salient or reify Whiteness as a construct but to better understand the relative silence and lack of collective action towards 'race' related disparities from a CoP perspective. The current study aims to explore how White British counselling psychologists understand and make sense of Whiteness, how this understanding and sense-making influences their practice, and to ascertain the impact of a lack of clear position on the topic in our literature and policy. The potential implications based on findings from this study could help to (a) reveal the

contemporary challenges and barriers to working with 'race' related issues in CoP practice (b) identify and make explicit ways that Whiteness may be operating within the profession and acting on professional practice/identity (c) provide important training recommendations for current and future generations of counselling psychologists and (d) inform and extend current professional guidelines on difference and diversity.

Whiteness is a phenomenon that permeates all aspects of society and all professions, not just CoP, but by critiquing our profession, we acknowledge the wider historical psycho-socio-political role that Whiteness plays, including its contemporary influence on society and psychology, from which CoP is not immune. A better understanding of Whiteness in the context of CoP gives us a better chance of disentangling ourselves and our profession from this phenomenon and to respond meaningfully and effectively to 'race' related issues. Without a drive towards scholarship and critical examinations of Whiteness within our field, it will not be possible to illuminate possible systemic issues which we can then address.

### **1.8 Intended audience**

Although the intended audience of the current study is anyone with an interest in addressing 'racial' disparities through the psychological study of Whiteness, it is particularly aimed at the 90% of White practitioner psychologists in the UK, many of whom may not have previously engaged with the topic in any depth and especially those who may feel defensive, unsure, or dismissive when the topic arises. Such feelings are understandable considering the insidious impact of Whiteness in society and the lack of available psychological policy or guidance on the topic. It is important to state that the critique of Whiteness is not a personal or professional attack against White psychologists or White people generally, nor is it a dismissal of the individual efforts of practitioners or teams who do take a stance against 'racial' disparities and engage in critical reflection and research on Whiteness. Rather, it is a critique of 'racial' disparity and the relationship between this and Whiteness as a system of power and privilege that individuals and professions invest in.

## 1.9 Statement of positionality

I am a White British woman in my thirties with English and Irish heritage. I grew up in a home where the Irish side of our heritage was celebrated in private but downplayed and sometimes hidden in public, perhaps a consequence of my mother's experience of growing up in Britain during the seventies amidst a backdrop of Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombings and the ensuing discrimination that members of the Irish community living in the UK experienced. I believe that this side of our heritage was hidden to better 'fit in' with other English people and to avoid prejudice. Although our White skin made this passing as 'ethnically English' easier, the generational trauma created, in part, by the poor treatment of Irish immigrants was not so easy to make disappear. Despite this community thriving in many ways, there were many reports of alcohol related and depressive 'disorders' and increased suicide rates in this population (Bracken et al., 1998), issues that have sadly impacted my family. Perhaps I am sharing this information to legitimise my 'right' to speak on Whiteness, or perhaps I want to convey to other White people that the construct of Whiteness is an issue that can be harmful to us too.

I first came to be interested in the topic of Whiteness following an exchange between a White tutor and a White peer during my early counsellor training almost a decade ago. The White male peer had shared that he found the feedback given to him by a Black female peer to be aggressive. The Black peer shared that she experienced this statement to be stereotypical and racist. Following this, the White tutor invited the White peer to reflect on how norms around an 'angry Black woman' stereotype could have informed his evaluation. This led to the tutor facilitating a process group on Whiteness. I was struck by the construction of Whiteness as a system of power and privilege that could inform our thinking, feelings, and behaviour as White people, to the detriment of the REM people around us. I am embarrassed to say that this had just never occurred to me before.

During some further reading on the concept of White privilege, I read a sentence that said something like, "White privilege doesn't mean that you have had an easy life, it just means that you have not been disadvantaged because of your race". This was a significant moment for me that changed how I viewed the concept of privilege. The

fact of my White privilege was cemented for me when a Black friend told me about an incident that had occurred at her local newsagents which she visited every day during the working week on the way to her job in the city. One weekend, she happened to be passing and had gone into this same shop in a tracksuit rather than in her usual suit. The same shopkeeper she had laughed and joked with every morning for over a year did not recognise her and treated her with suspicion, following her around the shop until she challenged him. Upon recognising her, his demeanour switched instantly to warm and friendly. In her suit, she was acceptable, but in her casual attire, she was not. It struck me that this was an experience that I would never have to worry about.

Later, I was having a conversation with a group of peers where I meant to state “I’ve realised how *privileged* I am” but instead I said, “I’ve realised how *prejudiced* I am”. A Black peer looked at me and said, “It’s good to hear a White person acknowledge that”. This sentence seemed to flick a switch in me, and I could suddenly see that I had bought into the idea of a post-racist society and had been completely oblivious to the system of Whiteness that had precipitated this belief. Although I was appalled when confronted with stories of overt racism and had been enraged on occasions when I had witnessed racist comments being casually made to REM friends (who always told me to ‘leave it’, probably because they could see a danger that I could not), I had been ignorant to the subtle ways that White people, including myself, could be perpetuating racism. Upon reflection, I can see that this ignorance was not benign. I was unconsciously invested in ignoring it. I witnessed White people respond to reports of racism with anxiety, discomfort, defensiveness, avoidance, irritation, and dismissal, and I experienced some of these feelings myself. After engaging with Whiteness more critically, I came to view it as a system that exists outside and regardless of me but a system that I invest in and contribute to. As a result, I began to experience more openness and flexibility, and less anxiety and defensiveness when thinking and talking about the topic.

During my doctoral studies, I noticed that Whiteness rarely came up in lectures or supervision. I felt surprised and disappointed by this gap because the emphasis on social justice had been a major part of what had drawn me to study CoP and I assumed that a lens on ‘racial’ disparities and Whiteness would be a big part of this. I witnessed conversations among peers on my course becoming fraught as there seemed to be a

lack of guidance on how to approach 'race' related topics. I assumed CoP training would equip us with the skills to recognise and challenge Whiteness constructively. Instead, when I shared my concern about 'racial' disparities in mental health and psychological service provision with a senior faculty member, they suggested that I needed to talk about it in my personal therapy. I knew that not every counselling psychologist I encountered would be an anti-racist activist, but I did expect something more than I personally found.

Looking at British CoP textbooks, journals, and professional guidelines I was struck by the absence of discussion there, too. Despite actively looking for it, I had no idea what British CoP had to say about Whiteness. It was a relief to find more guidance in the American CoP literature, especially Sue & Sue's (2019) textbook *Counseling the Culturally Diverse* which included accounts of lived experiences such as Kiselica's (2013) personal reflections on Whiteness. Such accounts made the process of reflecting on my relationship with Whiteness feel more accessible and helped me to normalise and manage my emotions in response to the topic. Once this groundwork had been laid, I found engaging with the wider literature much easier. Eventually, I began to wonder what the experience of Whiteness might be for other counselling psychologists in the UK and set about conducting research of my own.

My personal lens on Whiteness sits between the critical and the phenomenological. My viewpoint is informed by the American counselling psychology literature and the pedagogy of Black social justice activists whom I engage with through social media platforms. Through personal and professional experiences over time, I came to view Whiteness as a violent and insidious (albeit largely invisible) system that permeates all aspects of society. Having removed the blinkers, I could see Whiteness operating everywhere, and I was incredulous about how much I had missed. I began to judge other White people who were behaving as I once did and became impatient with them. I idealised REM people as the experts on 'race' and racism, sometimes to their annoyance. I felt uncertain about when I should speak up in discussions on 'race' and when I should stay silent and listen. I felt confused by REM people who dismissed racism and concepts like White privilege and unsure about how to challenge this as a White person.

This lived experience will have informed how I approached the current study, from the literature I chose to include to the themes I uncovered in the data. An ongoing commitment to reflexivity was at the heart of this research process and will be a thread throughout the ensuing chapters.

### **1.10 Researching Whiteness in a 'cancel culture'**

As a researcher on Whiteness, I am aware of the narratives around 'cancel culture' which can lead to a fear of speaking out on topics such as racism and Whiteness. Norris (2023) asserts that the mainstream values of any group, including professional groups, become the prevalent culture and that dissenting voices can become silenced through social pressures. Due to a fear of repercussions, academics may self-censor or hesitate to express authentic opinions on sensitive issues if they contravene the moral standards or self-image held by the wider academic community (Norris, 2023). Demonstrated within this very fear of 'cancel culture' is arguably a contemporary example of how the power dynamics of Whiteness can operate at a discursive level. Clark (2020) critiqued the very idea of a 'cancel culture' asserting that it is a misappropriation of the 'social media callout', a discursive accountability practice with roots in the Black vernacular tradition that harnesses the useful anger (Lorde, 1987) of Black people to frame and amplify issues that may otherwise not gain widespread attention such as everyday occurrences of racism.

Clarke (2020) argued that the practice of 'calling out' has been effectively re-defined by observers, especially journalists outside of online Black communities with the power and ability to amplify the White gaze and silence marginalised voices, by giving it the reductive and catching label of 'cancel culture'. Clark (2020) stated that the fear of being 'cancelled' has been transformed into a moral panic due to the extraction of debates from the nuanced Black communicative practices and cultural context that brought them to the fore. This issue highlights the importance of recognising the dynamics of Whiteness that create a fear of being 'cancelled' and further emphasises why researching Whiteness although challenging, is even more necessary.

## **1.11 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented the context in which counselling psychologists in the UK live and work including evidence of 'racial' disparities and the lack of discussion, research, and guidance in response to this issue from within the CoP profession. After a rationale for the current study's chosen terminology was presented, a critique of 'racial' inequality through the gaze of REM scholars was presented and utilised to frame the current study's focus on Whiteness. The purpose and possible implications of the current study were clarified as was the intended audience. Finally, the author's positionality was introduced, including the influences and motivations for this piece of research before the chapter closed with a consideration of researching Whiteness in a so-called 'cancel culture'.

## **Literature review**

### **2.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter begins with a description of the process of conducting the literature review before introducing the definition and dynamics of Whiteness. It critically discusses key conceptual themes including the various constructs, theories and formulations of Whiteness, the interaction of Whiteness with identity and how Whiteness manifests, functions and is addressed within professional practice. The methodological and epistemological limitations of the available research are considered. The literature review culminates with a specific focus on studies conducted with counselling psychologists to consider how Whiteness may be experienced and reinforced within the professional context of CoP. The review closes by identifying a gap in the literature, providing the rationale and aims for the current study and the formulation of a research question.

### **2.2 Process of conducting the literature review**

I conducted a narrative review (Baumeister & Leary, 1997) of the literature utilising research databases such as PsychINFO and MEDLINE. I began by searching for key phrases such as 'Whiteness + counselling psychology' (including American English spelling variations). I deepened my search by utilising a 'snowballing' method (Greenhalgh & Peacock, 2005) i.e., checking reference lists of relevant research. Narrative literature reviews have been criticised for only including research selected by the author which arguably introduces bias to the search and review process (Montori et al., 2003). As a hermeneutic phenomenological researcher, I acknowledged my assumptions and biases, rather than attempting to 'bracket' them and utilised reflexivity to be aware of my presuppositions without being constrained by them. I worked hermeneutically, moving between my existing knowledge and what I discovered from visiting the literature anew to co-create a new understanding of Whiteness. I paid attention not only to how I am influenced by the literature but also to how the literature is influenced by me 'as-researcher' (Dibley et al., 2020).



The study of Whiteness is prolific and vast, from both psychological and multi-disciplinary perspectives. This makes it impossible to address every piece of literature on the subject in this review. This is further compounded by the relationship between constructs in the literature that may be implicit or assumed. For example, an article written on racism may constantly allude to Whiteness without ever naming it explicitly. As a hermeneutic phenomenological researcher, my aim was not to review every piece of available literature and simply identify a gap in it, but to immerse myself in it, to be 'always-already' connected with it, informed by it, and meaningfully engaged with it (Dibley et al., 2020). The fruits of this endeavour are carefully organised and presented below.

### **2.3 The definition and dynamics of Whiteness**

The study of Whiteness is multi-faceted and the subject of exploration in various fields including psychology, sociology, education, feminist studies, management studies and social care studies, in addition to the dedicated field of critical Whiteness studies. The general agreement from this multi-disciplinary examination is that although Whiteness exists as a powerful and meaningful socio-political construct, it has no biological basis (Dalal 1993, Guess, 2006) and comprises a way of being that goes beyond an ostensive 'racial' identity (Matias, 2016). In the words of Baldwin (1984), "there are no White people" (p.180). Indeed, the notion of 'personal Whiteness' is a relatively modern concept (Du Bois, 1910).

Whiteness is broadly defined through this multi-disciplinary exploration as a system of overt and subliminal privileges, powers, laws, and life experiences that benefit those deemed to be White and systematically maintain structural, racialised and intersectional hierarchies that oppress REM people (Carr, 2017; Clark & Garner, 2009; Helms, 2017; Moreton- Robinson, 2005). It has also been defined psychosocially as a relational location consisting of material, discursive, and psychic dimensions (Gunaratnam & Lewis, 2001). Whiteness constantly shifts location upon complex maps of social, economic, and political power (Ellsworth, 1997). Power and oppression are perpetuated through political discourse and various overt and subliminal ideological, social, and cultural practices and processes that privilege Whiteness (Carr, 2017; Clark & Garner, 2009; Ellsworth, 1997; Helms, 2017). This dominance

and conferred superiority are evidenced throughout history (Frankenberg, 1993). Lundström (2014) proposes that Whiteness has an internal hierarchy, the peak of which is 'ideal Whiteness', usually associated with Northern European heritage. The level of privilege and power that individuals experience arguably equates with their proximity to this ideal. Someone can therefore have White skin and arguably still be oppressed based on their distance from this so-called 'ideal' (Lundström, 2014). For example, there was a period when groups like the Irish and southern Europeans were not considered to be White (Hunter et al., 2010).

Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) (a field borne out of critical race theory that offers a critical examination of Whiteness and its construction) asserts that the dominating presence of institutionalised racism in various aspects of society and culture creates a distorted 'racial' identity in White people based on the belief that they are superior to others. This belief manifests in a sense of entitlement to the benefits of being White without having to acknowledge or take responsibility for how one's actions or ignorance perpetuates racism (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). According to CWS theory, White people are intrinsically taught to ignore the privilege associated with their Whiteness, to see their worldview as the norm and to see 'race' as a characteristic that only belongs to others (McIntosh, 1989; Wildman, 2005). Conversely, due to the continuously changing conceptualisation of Whiteness throughout history, CWS also asserts that Whiteness and White privilege can continue to be reshaped and ultimately deconstructed (Delgado & Stefanic, 1997). Spanierman and Soble (2010) state that a CWS focus should be incorporated into the psychological study of Whiteness.

Whiteness is permeated by intersecting relationships of power which means that how an individual inhabits one category depends on how they inhabit another (Hunter, 2010). Intersectionality is a framework and method of inquiry that originates from Black feminist literature concerned with describing how people are located unevenly within various, converging social identities and how these intersections produce and reproduce social inequalities (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectional scholars (e.g., Brodtkin 1992; Ferber 1998; Frankenberg, 1993) argue that gender is central to the construction, dynamics, and experience of Whiteness and that neither concept can be fully comprehended alone. Whiteness and gender are also interwoven and co-constructed alongside various other identity categories including age, sexuality,

gender identity, class, and disability (Ferber, 1998; Frankenberg, 1993; Lorde, 1987). For example, someone who identifies as a White, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-class cis-gendered male may have a different experience of Whiteness to someone who identifies as a White, homosexual, disabled, working-class, cis-gendered female. Theories of intersectionality remind us that the experience of Whiteness is neither homogenous nor universal.

## **2.4 Psychotherapeutic formulations of Whiteness**

This review will now consider how Whiteness is constructed within a selection of psychotherapeutic approaches to further illustrate the dynamics of the phenomenon.

### **2.4.1 Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) approach**

Despite concerted efforts to make CBT more 'culturally sensitive' and accessible (Beck, 2019; Beck et al., 2019; Naz et al., 2019), Whiteness seems to have received little attention in the reviewed CBT literature. This has implications for how Whiteness may be worked with in therapy scenarios as CBT is the most common psychological therapy model in the NHS (NHS Digital, 2022). The encouragement in the literature for therapists to utilise 'self-CBT' skills to self-soothe and tolerate their uncertainty when navigating 'race' related issues may speak to the anxiety, guilt and shame that occurs around this topic (Mueller et al., 2010; Williams et al., 2022). CBT locates the origin of distress within the individual (Koç & Kafa, 2019) which may not consider the impact of 'racial' oppression. This is an area that warrants more study as the conceptualisation of distress is a social justice issue (Rimke, 2016).

### **2.4.2 Person-centred approach**

The person-centred approach emphasises the importance of addressing diversity issues but has been criticised for not adequately incorporating 'race' related issues in its outlook (Patterson, 1996). Talahite and Moodley, (2004) assert that living in White-dominated spaces creates introjected values that result in a sense of superiority in White people and inferiority in REM people. Crisp (2022) purports that the core conditions must be expanded to incorporate 'race' related issues. For example, broadening 'congruence' to 'cultural congruence' (acknowledging and accepting

personal and cultural differences) and expanding 'empathy' to 'cultural empathy' (communicating a genuine awareness and appreciation of clients' worldviews and cultural differences) (Crisp, 2022). Chantler (2004) suggests that the emphasis within the person-centred approach on understanding and accepting the uniqueness of the individual, and the pursuit of an internal locus of evaluation, may theoretically separate the unique individual from wider social contexts and processes that they must navigate.

### **2.4.3 Family and systemic therapy approach**

Kliman et al., (2019) claimed that any clinical exploration that omits social location, including Whiteness, is arguably incomplete. Formulations of Whiteness in the family and systemic literature appear to centre on the impact of various discourses, including those that support 'colour-blind' and 'colour-mute' attitudes, and those that place people into hierarchical categories based on their 'race' (Kliman et al., 2019). Kliman et al., (2019) argued that everyone in a pro-racist society internalises discourses of White superiority, privilege, and entitlement, regardless of their 'racial' identity or commitment to 'racial' justice. White people can perform this entitlement and benefit from structural oppression, bolstered by a comfortable ignorance of Whiteness and its privilege that has a relational impact (Hardy & Laszloffy, 1998a). Burton et al., (2010) claimed that contemporary discourse on Whiteness has started to dismantle the misnomer that only BME people have 'race', ethnicity or culture and has initiated exploration within family and systemic therapies around how being racialised as White is experienced and processed and transmitted in White families. The development of cultural competence from a systemic perspective emphasises the importance of therapists' self-reflection on their own experiences, cultural identity, and assumptions, in addition to developing their wider cultural knowledge (Dutton et al., 1999). Despite the growing focus within this approach on Whiteness and the use of self in cross-cultural work, the literature reviewed suggests that little attention has been paid to the culture or the Whiteness of the therapist in family and systemic therapy (with notable exceptions e.g. Kliman et al., 2019; Nolte, 2007; Wallis & Singh, 2014).

#### **2.4.4 Psychodynamic approach**

Whiteness appears to have been extensively formulated in the reviewed psychodynamic literature. Morgan (2021) spoke to an archetypal purity, innocence and goodness that is engulfed in an uncontaminated sense of Whiteness that rejects the stain of racist thought, denies projective processes, and distorts reality. Stevenson (2020) utilised Klein's (1959) model to illustrate how Whiteness may serve as a 'psychic retreat' (Steiner, 2003) from depressive anxieties. Outside of the depressive position, guilt, and sadness about the reality of racism and oppression, and one's contribution and benefit from it, may be blocked and unconscious leading to anxiety, shame, and depression. When anxiety reaches high levels, one of the outcomes may be an obsequious form of guilt that seeks reparation towards the oppressed 'object' at any cost (Lousada, 1997). Defensive forms of reparation unconsciously seek to reduce feelings of guilt and shame and may inhibit the opportunity to acknowledge harm and make meaningful reparations (Rasmussen & Salhani, 2010). This 'guiltiness' or 'guilty whiteness' (Mitchell, 2000) has been conceptualised as guilt from a paranoid-schizoid position (Harris, 2012). Seemingly, the ability to make genuine reparation can only be achieved from a depressive position where one can recognise shifting psychic states and can hold a balanced view of others (Rasmussen & Salhani, 2010).

#### **2.4.5 Existential approach**

The notion of guilt is also at the centre of an existential formulation of Whiteness (Hoffman, 2022). In addition to the 'normal' guilt that people may experience when considering issues of Whiteness, existential theorists purport that they may also experience an ontological, existential guilt (Hoffman, 2022). Existential guilt is conceptualised across three modes (1) *Eigenwelt* - one's relationship with oneself and one's potential, (2) *Mitwelt* – being with others and (3) *Umwelt* - one's relationship with the natural world (May, 1958/1994). Hoffman (2022) distinguishes *Mitwelt* as the most relevant type of guilt in the consideration of Whiteness, specifically White privilege, as one arguably faces the 'inevitability' of harming others, the inability to adequately help others and their complacency/participation in an unfair system. Hoffman (2022) argues that both normal and existential guilt may be utilised productively and creatively if

reframed as motivation to address one's participation in Whiteness and by taking action to dismantle it, whatever one's personal level of control or influence. The key task in preventing potentially productive normal and existential guilt from developing into 'neurotic guilt' (which emerges when normal or existential guilt is suppressed or repressed), is the ability to stay with it, listen to it, and act responsibly (Hoffman, 2020).

The variation between formulations of Whiteness suggests a lack of agreement between psychotherapeutic approaches consistent with an inconsistent and ambiguous conceptualisation which may have implications for how it is addressed in practice.

## **2.5 Constructs of Whiteness**

Having reviewed some of the psychotherapeutic formulations of Whiteness, this review now turns to how the study of Whiteness has been broken down into various constructs within the psychological literature, a selection of which are summarised below.

### **2.5.1 White privilege**

McIntosh (1989) identified the concept of White privilege after noticing in their learning about racism that the focus of teaching seemed to be on the disadvantages of those impacted by it and not on those receiving the benefits. McIntosh (1989, 1995) theorised that White people may be unaware of the unearned societal rewards and advantages that they receive on account of their skin colour and that this lack of awareness can be transmitted inter-generationally. Neville et al. (2001) conceptualised White privilege as a complex and insidious network of relationships set within a 'racial' hierarchy that operates at both individual and systemic levels. Examples of how White privilege manifests include not being routinely called upon to be a spokesperson for one's 'race' (Utsey & Gernat, 2002) or a scenario where a clinical supervisor attributes a failure in a cross 'racial' counselling relationship to a REM client's perceived pathology rather than examining the role that a White therapist might have played (Helms & Cook, 1999). To receive benefits at the expense and degradation of others, even unconsciously, perpetuates racism (Rothenberg, 2005).

When the concept of White privilege has been raised with White research participants, there have been reports of varying levels of emotional discomfort (e.g. guilt and shame) and cognitive resistance (e.g. distortion and denial), depending on the participants' level of awareness (Ancis & Szymanski, 2001; Arminio, 2001; Hays et al. 2004; 2007a; Thompson & Neville, 1999).

### **2.5.2 Psychological cost of racism to Whites**

The psychological literature is replete with examples of the emotional, cognitive and behavioural responses to discomfort that White therapists can demonstrate when discussing 'race' related issues (Ancis & Szymanski, 2001; Arminio, 2001; Cardemil & Battle, 2003; Clarkson & Nippoda, 1997; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1999, 2001; Hays et al. 2004; 2007a; Iyer et al., 2003; Knox et al., 2003; Miller & Fellows, 2007; Owen et al., 2017; Parker & Schwartz, 2002; Spanierman et al., 2008; Utsey et al., 2005a). For example, Utsey et al., (2005a) explored how White trainee counsellors responded to hypothetical and 'racially' provocative counselling and supervision vignettes and their findings indicated that direct discussions about 'race' and racism failed to go beyond a superficial level as participants demonstrated 'unmanageable' anxiety, agitation, confusion, and 'rhetorical incoherence' (a term devised by Bonilla-Silva (2002) to describe difficulty saying words like 'Black'). Utsey et al., (2005a) purported that anxiety past a certain point may hinder empathy.

Spanierman and Heppner (2004) have conceptualised such responses as the 'psychological costs of racism to Whites', the consequence of holding a dominant position in an unfair system of a 'racial' hierarchy. This does not imply that such costs compare with those that REM people can experience but it is argued that racism can negatively impact White people too (Helms, 1992; Kivel, 1996; Todd et al., 2011). Spanierman and Heppner (2004) classified these costs according to cognitive (e.g., distorted beliefs), behavioural (e.g., segregation and avoidance) and emotional (e.g. feelings of guilt, shame, fear) responses. In studies that have explored these costs, higher levels of White empathy and White guilt were associated with more multicultural education, increased 'racial' awareness, positive attitudes towards REM people and increased cultural sensitivity (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004; Spanierman et al., 2008). Meanwhile, higher levels of White fear were associated with less multicultural education, less ethnocultural empathy, less 'racial' awareness, less cultural sensitivity

and higher levels of racial prejudice (Case, 2007b; Spanierman & Heppner, 2004). This body of work led Spanierman and Heppner (2004) to develop the Psychosocial Costs of Racism to Whites Scale (PCRWS).

### **2.5.3 Colour-blind racial attitudes**

Sue (2003) stated that some White people may, often unconsciously, develop a sense of entitlement towards the privileges that members of other 'racial' groups have been systemically denied. To protect this privilege and to avoid having to acknowledge and rectify the realities of racism, White people can deny, avoid, and distort the impact of 'race' by adopting a colour-blind racial attitude (CoBRA) (Carr, 1997). Although a CoBRA can ostensibly be held by anyone, White individuals are reportedly more likely to adhere to them (Carr, 1997; Neville et al., 2000). Neville et al., (2000, 2001) emphasised that a CoBRA differs from overt racism in that it does not espouse a belief in 'racial' superiority but rather consists of a lack of awareness or denial of the social significance of 'race' accompanied by dismissing or minimising the existence of contemporary racism in three areas: (1) White privilege, (2) institutional racism and (3) present-day 'racial' discrimination.

A CoBRA can develop from a genuine desire to be unprejudiced or an attempt to resolve the tension between a sincere desire to believe in 'racial' equality and the simultaneous recognition at some level of the unearned privileges of being White (Gushue, 2004; Neville et al., 2001). It has been argued that a CoBRA in a therapist may influence cognitive schemas associated with the interpretation of 'race' related stimuli and social judgements (Neville et al., 2000) which may cause them to downplay the impact that Whiteness can have on the therapeutic relationship (Gushue & Constantine, 2007). Ridley (1995) argued that misdiagnosis and the perception of more severe pathology in REM clients could be due to CoBRAs in practitioners. Studies have shown that when some REM clients experience CoBRAs in their White therapists, they report less satisfaction with therapy, a weaker therapeutic alliance and reduced perception of multicultural competence (Chang & Berk, 2009; Constantine, 2002, 2007; Pope-Davis et al., 2002).



#### 2.5.4 Anti-racism and White alliance

At the other end of the conceptual spectrum, anti-racism is defined as thought and practice that seeks to confront, eradicate, and ameliorate racism which includes identifying and deconstructing Whiteness as a 'race', as a system of privilege and as a social construction (Bonnett, 2000; Dlamini, 2002). Spanierman and Smith (2017) define White allyship as a lifelong process that includes (1) the ability to understand the nuance of racism and White privilege, (2) self-reflection on racism and one's own positionality to it, (3) utilising 'racial' privilege, (4) actively disrupting racism, (5) building working coalitions with REM people and (6) meeting resistance from White individuals. Williams et al., (2022) argued that although many White people may aspire to practice such anti-racist allyship, factors such as fear, anxiety, and avoidance may inhibit them. The anti-racism movement calls for White groups to recognise the full extent of their participation in and contribution to racism (Balbus 2004). For therapists, anti-racist practice includes actively deconstructing the manifestations of an invalid 'racial' hierarchy in clinical research and practice (Haeny et al. 2021). Despite the challenges of this work, it has also been found to invoke feelings of increased hope, compassion, and joy (Siegel, 2010; Smith & Redington, 2010).

Doharty et al., (2021) cautioned that the Whiteness of anti-racism scholarship itself should be scrutinised. Self-identified White allies may engage in unhelpful behaviour including short-term involvement, only acting when it is convenient, seeking recognition, dominating anti-racism efforts, and taking a paternalistic or 'White saviour' approach (O'Brien, 2001; Owens, 2017). Spanierman et al. (2017) highlighted that such behaviours by White researchers are unhelpful to the endeavour of anti-racist scholarship as they can be damaging to REM communities, dismiss the work of REM scholars, contribute to 'racially' oppressive literature, and reinforce White hegemony in research. Spanierman et al. (2017) asserted that more helpful approaches to anti-racist scholarship focus on the problem of White racism from the assumptions and biases of White researchers to wider systemic issues. This approach should be exercised in conjunction with demonstrating understanding and sensitivity to cultural mistrust and resentment among REM colleagues and should seek collaborations built on trust and mutual understanding. REM scholars have emphasised the importance

of White scholars acknowledging their Whiteness to reduce the potential for White racism in research, to be mindful that White 'racial' identity development influences White researchers just as it does White participants, and have encouraged White allies to turn the focus of their research away from REM groups and towards themselves and their own communities (Helms, 1993; Sue, 1993).

### **2.5.5 Psychometric Measurement of Whiteness**

Over the past several decades, a body of research has focused on the development of psychometric tools that aim to measure constructs of Whiteness (e.g. Hays et al., 2007b; Helms & Carter, 1990; Miller, 2017; Neville et al., 2000; Paradies et al., 2013; Spanierman & Heppner, 2004;). A systemic review by Hays et al., (2021) evaluated the structural and psychometric properties of all Whiteness measurement scholarship and found varied analytical processes and significant methodological shortcomings in the development of some of the scales including a lack of expert review and piloting, gaps in procedures for examining underlying constructs and dimensions, low internal consistency values for construct representation, and missed opportunities to increase the validity and replicability of findings. These issues call into question whether the underlying domains of Whiteness are being properly and consistently measured in quantitative research.

Whiteness scales have also been criticised for their lack of refinement including limited intersectional sensitivity, a narrow focus on 'racial' attitudes (i.e., only focusing on attitudes towards a single 'racial' group) and only being able to assess one dimension of Whiteness at a time (which incurs the need for multiple tools) (Schooley et al., 2019). Despite their limitations, the refinement of psychometric tools is ongoing, and they have gone some way in helping to elucidate how the various constructs of Whiteness operate and interact (when utilised with an acknowledgement of their limitations and a good understanding of the literature). Psychometric tools have also allowed for the evaluation of intervention research and training with larger groups of people (e.g. Case, 2007b; Paone et al, 2015) and brief interventions (e.g. Soble et al., 2011). The scores obtained from tools may also be utilised by therapists personally and in training situations to facilitate reflection and development when used alongside complimentary activities such as journaling and written reaction essays (Kagnici, 2014).

Studies that utilise psychometric tools as the sole form of evaluation may allow for the observation of change but do not offer insight into the process of change or the barriers to it. For example, Paone et al., (2015) conducted a quantitative study that examined the impact of a 'race' based, experiential course that utilised various interrelated outcome measures. On the Psychosocial Costs of Racism to Whites Scale, although there was a statistically significant change for most participants post-course regardless of which stage of White 'racial' identity development they had started at, there was no statistically significant change for those who had started at the initial 'naïve' stage. Paone et al., (2015) noted that the absence of statistical significance did not necessarily imply a lack of meaningful personal change but there was no way of exploring this further within the parameters of the quantitative research design e.g., the course utilised journaling to facilitate the participants' process and development but this data was not analysed. Psychometric-based research may be complemented by other forms of data collection such as qualitative research that explores the experience behind the measured constructs.

## **2.6 Whiteness as a 'racial' identity**

The above constructs appear in a body of research on models of White racial identity development within the psychological literature that illustrate how individuals' relationships to these constructs may change as their White identity 'develops'. A review of these models and the tensions between them will now be explored.

### **2.6.1 Models of White 'racial' identity development**

Several conceptual models of White 'racial' identity (WRI) appear in the CoP literature (e.g. Hardiman, 1982; Helms 1990,1995,1997; Ponterotto, 1988; Ponterotto et al., 2006; Sue & Sue, 2019) illustrating the dynamic process of development that White people ostensibly experience in relation to their 'racial' identity. Although each model varies, they generally appear to illustrate a proposed process of change from an initial position characterised by a lack of/limited awareness of racialisation processes and associated privileges, racism, and accurate knowledge of REM people, followed by a period of increasing awareness characterised by questioning, reflection and discomfort as individuals gain knowledge in 'race' related issues. In time, one can

ostensibly arrive at a position of understanding racialisation processes, acknowledging one's perpetuation of Whiteness/racism, reduced discomfort, and a commitment to anti-racist action. WRI models have been critiqued for appearing too linear (LaFleur et al., 2002, Rowe et al., 1994). The authors of such models retort that the nature of development is not necessarily linear and may involve movement between positions, only advancing through some of the phases or not developing at all (Helms, 1995; Sue & Sue, 2019). Helms (1995) changed the labelling of their 'stages' to 'statuses' in response to this criticism to delineate their description.

### **2.6.2 White 'racial' consciousness**

The theory of White 'racial' consciousness (WRC) (LaFleur et al., 2002; Rowe et al., 1994) has been proposed as an alternative to models of WRI. In a move away from identity theory and towards a social-cognitive view, WRC describes the types of racial attitudes ostensibly held by White people that are said to be predominantly acquired through observational learning. WRC holds that these attitudes are mostly impervious to verbal persuasion and are instead prone to situational influences that result in intentions that guide observable behaviours. An example might include a change in perspective that leads to action after witnessing the racist treatment of a REM peer. The attitudes of White people towards REM people are assumed to develop in the same way as other attitudes and usually change through either direct or indirect conflicting experiences. WRC comprises two 'racial' attitude orientations each with two attitude types: (1) 'racial' acceptance: (a) dominative type (pro-White view, little 'racial' acceptance) and (b) integrative type (comfortable interacting with 'racial' minorities, high 'racial' acceptance) and (2) 'racial' justice: (a) conflictive type (non-discriminatory but believe that REM people are given unfair advantages) and (b) reactive type (react to the status quo and believe that members of visible 'racial' and ethnic groups are treated unfairly). The level of commitment to one's 'racial' attitude orientation is measured by the degree to which one admits to being avoidant (unconcerned), dissonant (uncertain), and dependent (reflecting the views of others) (LaFleur et al., 2002; Rowe et al., 1994).

### **2.6.3 White dialectics**

Todd & Abrams (2011) propose that research on WRI development may be better understood through the lens of White dialectics. They assert that there may be tension and movement along various proposed dialectics as White individuals reflect on 'race'. Rather than inhabiting one static position as proposed by other models, this model states that it is possible to be drawn simultaneously to opposing ends of a dialectic. Taking White privilege as an example, one might be pulled between 'I am advantaged' (recognition of White privilege and personal benefits from this privilege) and 'I am not advantaged' (denial or minimisation of privilege, focusing on outgroup disadvantage e.g., gender). Movement along this dialectic may occur within a single conversation or over a longer period. Todd and Abrams (2011) described no end stage, rather the aim is to practice 'White authenticity' conceptualised as a continual process of struggle with White dialectics whilst engaging in anti-racist action.

The above models may be useful for conceptualisation purposes and in illustrating some of the experiences that White people may go through as they reflect on 'race' related issues and develop their relationship with and attitude towards Whiteness. As such they are drawn upon regularly in the literature. Systematic reviews of psychometric tools designed to measure the various constructs of Whiteness (Hays et al., 2021; Schooley et al., 2019) are divided on their underlying assumptions about whether Whiteness is a developmental process (with linear or circular progression through phases) or if it is a multidimensional construct that is temporally or situationally occurring and context dependent. This division appears to reflect the lack of consensus about how Whiteness interacts with identity.

## **2.7 Whiteness in the professional and institutional context**

Based on the literature reviewed so far, Whiteness has emerged as a complex, multi-faceted topic that manifests as both an internal experience and an external structure. The focus of the review will now explore how Whiteness is manifested and reinforced in the professional and institutional context, firstly by considering psychology specifically and then by drawing on relevant literature from related fields.

### 2.7.1 Whiteness in psychology

The discipline of psychology, including its organisations and institutions, did not evolve independently of socio-political processes of racialisation. Contemporary psychology in the UK was conceived at the turn of the century when ruling societies accepted hierarchies of class and 'race' as fact (Williams et al., 2022). Modern psychological thought developed through a lens of colonialism, eugenics, and empiricism (Guthrie, 2004; Patel, 2003). Many prominent academics were invested in 'scientifically' promoting the notion that White people are superior (Guthrie, 2004). To this day, invalid racist ideas, both implicit and explicit, are still taught, published, and cited within the discipline (Williams et al., 2022). The psychological evidence base disproportionately represents White, Western populations (Arnett, 2016), whilst Eurocentric models of distress grounded in individualism are the most prevalent forms of treatment e.g., CBT (Rimke, 2016).

Fanon (1986) asserted that psychology transmits, reinscribes, and reifies ideologically loaded Eurocentric notions that work to serve the dominant social-political group and stressed the importance of adequately re-evaluating and reformulating Eurocentric theories so that they can sufficiently critique and address the power structure in colonial and post-colonial contexts. This critical focus is also important in Western settings where colonial ideals and ideologies are reproduced (Hunter, 2021). McCubbin et al., (2023) stressed the importance of decolonising training curriculums to deconstruct institutional racism at the core of the academy emphasising that ignoring the pervasiveness of Whiteness in psychology training institutions perpetuates White supremacy.

Whiteness is reflected so consistently as an everyday occurrence through societal norms and teachings that a phenomenon known as 'ethnocentric monoculturalism' occurs whereby Whiteness can become 'invisible' i.e., White people are simply 'normal', there is no need to think about their 'race' as this belongs to 'Others' (Dalton, 2005; Sue, 2004; 2006). This imposed cultural conditioning confers a systematic sense of 'racial' dominance and superiority onto White people that can make them unaware of the meaning of Whiteness, how it interacts with their perception of the world, and how it impacts REM people (Sue, 2013; Sue & Sue, 2019). When

Whiteness is viewed as an absent norm, the behaviours and beliefs of other groups become not just different, but deviant (Sue, 2003). Chronic exposure to ethnocentric monoculturalism, living in a racialised society and dominant themes of racism and White supremacy inherent in Western social discourse makes it arguably impossible for White therapists not to be exposed to or inherit aspects of White supremacy such as misinformation, Eurocentric assumptions, 'racial' bias, and prejudice (Akamatsu, 2002; Burkard and Knox, 2004; Dalal, 2006; Gallardo & Ivey, 2014; Hardy & Laszloffy, 1998b). Therapeutic relationships can be distorted by insidious power operations at work in pro-racist discourse regardless of the 'racial' dynamic between therapist and client (BICAP, 2017). Even subtle biases on the part of a therapist may profoundly influence the conceptualisation of distress and treatment of REM clients (Sue & Sue, 2019).

Sue and Sue (2019) stated that although many White people may perceive themselves as unbiased individuals with a genuine concern for the wellbeing of REM people and a commitment to social justice, this self-image can act as a barrier to recognising and addressing prejudices and biases and inhibit White therapists from offering multiculturally competent therapy. The literature indicates that White therapists rarely reflect on how Whiteness could be impacting the therapeutic endeavour (Rothman et al, 2012; Ryde, 2011; Sue, 2006; Tuckwell, 2002, 2006). This lack of reflection risks (1) impairing therapeutic alliances with REM clients, especially when they bring issues related to oppression to therapy hence re-creating societal oppression in the therapy room (Day-Vines et al, 2007; Gushue & Constantine, 2007; Lago, 2011) and (2) neutralising Whiteness and pathologising 'racial' trauma (Fernando, 2017). These risks are arguably the very antithesis of CoP's emphasis on the centrality of the therapeutic relationship, attentiveness to social and cultural context, reflexive-practice, and social justice (Douglas et al., 2016; Strawbridge and Woolfe, 2004). Fortunately, research has also shown that it is possible to improve White therapists' emotional rapport, responsiveness, and inter-'racial' connection with REM clients (Kanter et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2020).

### 2.7.2 Whiteness in related fields

Research conducted in fields related to psychology (e.g. health and social care, welfare, counselling, and psychotherapy) has much to say to the field of psychology about professional entanglement with Whiteness including how the phenomenon manifests and is reinforced in organisational and institutional spaces. A selection of this research will now be presented.

Hunter (2021) stressed that racialisation in health and welfare services produces a toxic affective atmosphere and a violent disconnection that limits the ability of people to listen and relate to each other or to be attentive to the mechanisms of institutionalised power and inequality thus sustaining colonialism into contemporary coloniality. Racialisation acts to nullify lived experience and deny the full spectrum of emotion that is generated between people in favour of the anti-relational, individualist human ideal of Whiteness which inhibits the human ability to care other than through a narrow 'White frame' (Hunter, 2021; Lewis, 2010). Hunter (2021) asserted that there is a 'White possessive dynamic' at work in the act of care within British welfare, the same characteristic of 'racial' capitalism that justified British colonisation by re-framing its violent 'civilising' practices as a moral activity rooted in benevolence (Hunter, 2010; 2021). This uneven, racialised dynamic is bound to a sense of superiority and the assumption that the 'carer' knows what is best for the Other who is deemed unable to care for themselves, designated to a state of deficit and perpetually objectified and re-racialised through the narcissistic gaze of the White saviour (Hunter, 2010).

Hunter (2021) asserted that it is important to recognise the continuity between contemporary experiences of racialised hurt and pain and historical and ongoing colonial violence within the British Welfare State. This includes the formation of the NHS and policies relating to 'race' equality and inclusion, cultural narratives supporting 'race' based practices, and emotional dynamics which code Whiteness through institutions as a mostly tacit yet "...known and a protected ideal, an absent presence, a known unknown; framing understandings of professional selves, institutional spaces and broader national understandings". (p. 349). This recognition is interrupted, however, by institutionalised 'White Ignorance' which denies the power and privilege accrued through Whiteness, resists knowledge of complicity in systemic racism and refuses to consider remedying the systemic social inequality within welfare services



beyond superficial, symbolic, and managerial policy responses such as performative commitments to diversity and inclusion, thus prioritising White comfort over REM experiences of trauma and violence (Hunter, 2021).

Hunter (2015b; 2021) proposed the idea of 'relational choreography' as an alternative approach to addressing racialisation in institutional contexts that is not rooted in unhelpful binaries (e.g. Black/White, good/bad, victim/oppressor) asserting that these create a sense of defensiveness which can inhibit or paralyse White welfare workers from providing care and solidarity against White supremacy. Within this approach, manifestations of Whiteness such as White supremacy are not viewed as a fundamental part of a person's identity or an essential sense of the self, but of the relationships out of which the self emerges. Indeed, reducing Whiteness to an individually held identity is seen as a function of coloniality (Hunter, 2021). Challenging racialisation through relational choreography is about recognising Whiteness as an expression of ongoing colonial relating, shifting thinking away from the binary and linear mindset of coloniality (e.g. you are essentially either racist or anti-racist), and accepting that we are always capable of perpetuating racist violence (Hunter, 2021). Rather than viewing this as a failure, this knowledge has the potential to allow for a fuller and more responsible way of relating which resists the colonial dynamics and helps to develop self-understanding at the point where difference occurs. Relational choreography is developed through the disruption of Whiteness by embracing an unsettled process of relation with others and being open to non-linear interruptions, stories, glances, senses, and feelings (Hunter, 2021).

Gunaratnam and Lewis (2001) highlighted the psychoanalytical and political processes of 'racial' dynamics and systems of thinking in social and welfare organisations and mounted a challenge to the production and experience of 'race' in these spaces by proposing the use of 'emotional labour' (the management, facilitation, and regulation of emotions) to evade structures of 'racial' thinking (a psychic and social practice which includes the production and processes of racialisation, racist beliefs, and Whiteness). Utilising the theory of Klein (1975), Gunaratnam and Lewis (2001) drew a parallel between unconscious defences against anxiety within the self and how organisations construct and display features of paranoid anxiety due to their 'racial' thinking and emotionally suppressing and repressing systems, policies, and

procedures. Gunaratnam and Lewis (2001) asserted that rationality is privileged over emotion in the systems and practices of organisations which leads to the defensive splitting of emotions conceptualised in Klein's (1975) 'schizoid position'. Because the irrational and unconscious aspects that underpin 'racial' dynamics and systems of thinking cannot be addressed rationally, this splitting arguably immobilises practitioners and disrupts their capacity to carry out their role. Therefore, there is a need to identify and engage with the emotions beneath 'racial' dynamics to understand and explore the anxieties they express.

This emotional awareness however must form part of a wider process of recognising, integrating, and containing in a state of wholeness both negative and positive experiences, feelings, and aspects of the self and Other as conceptualised in Klein's (1975) 'depressive position'. According to Gunaratnam and Lewis (2001), feelings contained in this position (such as collectivised anger and unconscious guilt) can create the necessary conditions to form caring and constructive relationships that evade 'racial' thinking and recognise and value difference. To achieve such transformation, Gunaratnam and Lewis (2001) asserted that organisations need to foster a different relationship to the emotions involved in 'racial' thinking (e.g. shame, defensiveness, denial) and cultivate an environment of taking ownership and responsibility for such emotions so that new conversations can occur, fear of the Other can be managed, and a path beyond schizoid defences can be found. As part of this process of moving away from policy and procedure toward process and relationship, organisations are urged to recognise and respond to how they simultaneously produce and are produced by racialised identifications and categorisations, even in their attempts to garner more equitable service provision. This includes a consideration of how the requirements of their own equality and diversity policies and strategies may provoke anxieties and defences that promote 'racial' thinking and professional immobilisation.

Taking a phenomenological approach to how Whiteness is reproduced institutionally, Ahmed (2007) stated that the bodies of institutions are made up of the bodies that gather within them and that the shape of an institution is determined by its orientation around some bodies more than others. Ahmed's (2007) conceptualisation asserts that a predominantly White space is shaped by the gathering and proximity of White bodies

and takes on the White skin of those who inhabit it. Whiteness is not seen as it coheres and is institutionalised whilst non-White bodies feel uncomfortable, exposed, and different. The shaping process does not occur through chance, it is the result of work done and repeated over time to reproduce Whiteness through institutional habits including the allocation of resources and practices of recruitment. The act of recruiting new White bodies into an institution restores and sustains its White body.

According to Ahmed (2007), White space is not simply claimed physically by the number of White bodies within it, rather it is claimed through the accumulation of a repeated style of embodiment, of a 'sinking in' to the space through an investment in and alignment with its ways. Bodies that can inherit the character of an institution by reflecting and expressing its likeness, are recruited more than others. As the institution is orientated around Whiteness, even non-White bodies must inhabit Whiteness to get into it. When non-White bodies do not pass and instead stand out, the Whiteness of the space is re-confirmed. Ahmed (2007) stated that even White bodies do not inhabit White spaces unconditionally, the extent of their inhabitation depends on how other intersectional categories are occupied (e.g. class, gender, sexuality).

The above conceptualisations emphasise the importance of a move away from binary and rational 'racial' thinking and embodied reproductions of Whiteness within institutions that cause resistance and immobilisation towards a focus on disrupting the status quo and making space to facilitate and accommodate the processes, emotions, relationships, and actions necessary to challenge Whiteness.

## **2.8 Addressing Whiteness in the professional practice of counselling psychology**

Having considered theory and research about the various constructs of Whiteness including how it is produced and reproduced in professional and institutional contexts, the focus of the review will now turn to how Whiteness is addressed specifically in the therapeutic context.

### 2.8.1 Multicultural competence

An awareness of cultural issues and the experience of prejudice and discrimination that individuals face have been cited as central tenets of CoP (Cooper, 2009; Martin, 2010) yet counselling psychologists are no less immune to Eurocentric assumptions and biases (Ivey, 1993). Since the conception of the Multicultural Counselling Competencies (MCC) model (Sue et al., 1982) in the CoP literature, the primary focus of MCC appears to have moved away from a sole focus on understanding 'minority'<sup>2</sup> groups towards better understanding the 'majority' group i.e., White people (Sue & Sue, 2019). Within this approach, White therapists are implored to consider their own rich and dynamic cultural identities, recognise, and change personal biases, acknowledge personal privileges, decentre Whiteness and confront 'racial' discrimination at individual and systemic levels to be considered competent to work multiculturally (Richardson & Molinaro, 1996; Spanierman et al., 2017). Therapists unaware of their own beliefs and cultural values may not be able to engage meaningfully with clients around difference and may offer interventions influenced by their own unexamined value system (Campbell-Balcom and Martin-Berg, 2019).

MCC has been conceptualised as a competency that can be 'achieved' (Fouad et al., 2009; Mosher et al., 2017), but this idea of competence may not be compatible with the various constructs of Whiteness in the literature, such as WRI, WRC and White dialectics that are purportedly ongoing and never complete. In a critique of the notion of cultural competence, cultural humility has been proposed as an alternative approach as it moves away from a detached mastery of a theoretically finite body of knowledge in favour of a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation, remedying power imbalances in the therapeutic relationship and building more collaborative relationships (Gallardo & Ivey, 2014; Mosher et al., 2017; Owen et al., 2016; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998; Vera & Speight, 2003). This latter approach appears to be more congruent with the relational, phenomenological values of CoP (Kasket, 2011).

In a study aimed at elucidating the underlying mechanisms salient to MCC development, Angyal (2021) conducted a phenomenological inquiry which explored

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<sup>2</sup> Minority in a Western context but may be a global majority

the meaning and experience of Whiteness and MCC for a group of twelve 'racially' and ethnically diverse counselling psychology faculty members, four of whom identified as White. The study indicated that whilst Whiteness emerged as a prolific part of all participants' daily personal and professional experience, White participants demonstrated much lower levels of awareness and experiences of Whiteness compared to their REM counterparts.

Thematic themes highlighted that White participants: (1) reported privilege including psychic, material and professional benefits from cultural and systemic Whiteness including feeling valued, positively regarded, affirmed and prioritised in professional spaces, (2) felt cautious, anxious, and fearful of making mistakes, offending, failing to challenge Whiteness or support REM colleagues and students, and failing to meet their own expectations and those of REM colleagues, (3) felt paralysed by White guilt, shame, and White fragility which sometimes led to disengagement from examining and understanding privileges and their role in perpetuating cultural-systemic Whiteness, whilst anger about racism and their own engagement in systemic whiteness facilitated empathy and motivated action, (4) experienced a number of affective, relational and personal costs in relation to Whiteness, (5) struggled to recognise the dissonance between some of their values and behaviours, (6) found the assumption of competence and expertise upon graduation disincentivising from engaging in ongoing reflexivity and growth, and (7) reported that their critical awareness and cultural competency skills were obtained through personal efforts rather than an integrated part of any training course.

These findings appear to be consistent with the reviewed literature on how the constructs of Whiteness operate and offer insight into the barriers that White counselling psychologists may face when working cross-culturally. With a sample of just four White participants, the broader implications are limited but still serve as a valuable contribution to a relatively under-explored research area. The participants in this study had experience delivering MCC training so their knowledge of and exposure to topics salient to Whiteness may be more prevalent than colleagues without this type of background. The sampling of both White and REM participants allowed for comparison between groups but also added some ambiguity. For example, sometimes it was difficult to ascertain which themes originated from the REM participants or the

White participants. It was not stated in the study's demographical information if the participants were also in clinical practice with clients which may limit the scope of the findings.

### **2.8.2 Whiteness in training**

CoP research into the various constructs of Whiteness has been utilised to inform, develop and evaluate training to develop MCC and other areas such as White 'racial' identity, critical self-awareness, White alliance, and anti-racism with promising results (e.g., Brown et al., 1996; Carter, 2003; Chao, 2013; Chick et al., 2009; Fu, 2015; Havlik et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2013; Kagnici, 2014; Kanter et al., 2020; Malott et al., 2022; Paone et al., 2015; Rothman et al., 2012; Roysircar, 2004; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000; Vera et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2020). There are some issues with the research design in these types of studies to consider. For example, participants may limit their disclosure out of a fear of being seen as racist and the presence of trainers on research teams which may influence feedback (Rothman et al., 2012). There are several recommendations in the literature on ways to enhance learning on 'race' related courses including developing an understanding of meta-affective and meta-cognitive dimensions (the ability to monitor and regulate emotional and cognitive responses to 'race'-based course material) (Chick et al., 2009), incorporating personally transformative experiences (Atkins et al., 2017), stipulating precursors to training such as critical consciousness (e.g. critical thinking skills around Whiteness) (Chao et al. 2011) and the experience of a critical incident (an incident which has created dissonance such as witnessing 'racial' injustice) (Fouad et al., 2009).

The importance of access to accounts of personal lived experience by White role models (either written or spoken) has also been identified as an important factor in training on Whiteness including the development of WRI, White allyship and social justice action (Kiselica, 2004; Paone & Malott, 2013; Paone et al., 2015; Rothman et al, 2012; Spanierman et al., 2017; Tatum, 1994; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000; Wood & Patel, 2017). However, it is not clear how or why they appear to be so helpful. There is also a lack of distinction between mentor and peer role-modelling. For example, Utsey et al., (2005a) observed that participants who were prepared to openly discuss their own racism in a focus group format had both a modelling effect on the group *and*

increased anxiety amongst their peers. In a study by Yeung et al. (2013) participants reported that that when they heard their peers' viewpoints on difficult 'racial' issues, they felt less defensive and more open compared to when they engaged with this topic in traditional lecture formats. A better understanding of individuals' responses to these accounts may have implications for training on 'race' related topics. Todd & Abrams (2011) have called for such accounts to be collated and analysed.

### **2.8.3 Whiteness in supervision**

Ryde (2009, 2011) argued that Whiteness is almost always pertinent to supervision and stressed the importance of ensuring that the supervisory environment is attuned to the influence and exploration of Whiteness in all aspects of the supervisory relationship and process. Ryde (2009) purported that the process of navigating the web of interconnected phenomenal worlds in the supervisory triad is complex and although cultural and 'racial' differences may sometimes be considered during the reflective process of supervision, the focus is often on the experience of the REM supervisee or client and not on the meaning of Whiteness in the relationship. Conversations about 'racial' issues in supervision are also typically reported to be less structured and more ambiguous (Lawless et al. 2001; Pendry, 2012). Ryde (2009) suggested that reflection on 'Whiteness' may be structured by utilising Hawkins and Shoet's (2012) existing seven-eyed model of supervision in conjunction with the Model of White Awareness (Ryde, 2009) (a cyclical model moving through levels of awareness from a position of denial about the responsibility White people have for racism to a position of integration characterised by not over-identifying with Whiteness, understanding its systemic and intersubjective context, and relating and acting with integrity) to facilitate both supervisors' and supervisees' understanding and awareness of Whiteness.

Mason (2005) argued that supervisors should create a context where discussions about 'race' and racism can occur, and relational risks may be taken. Ryde (2009) suggested that potentially inhibitive feelings of fear and anxiety when discussing Whiteness may be allayed by adopting a phenomenological approach in supervision characterised by an enquiring, dialogic attitude underpinned by a dynamic that fosters acceptance, and curiosity. A phenomenological approach may allow the supervisor

and supervisee to tune into how their own experience may impact the world of the client and can lead to discovery about the client that is not immediately obvious (Ryde, 2009). Pendry (2012) emphasised the importance of supervisors modelling ongoing self-reflection around 'racial' issues and proposed that supervisees' ability to take responsibility for themselves 'racially' should be a formal part of their evaluation. There appears to be scope for further research into how these suggestions translate into practice.

#### **2.8.4 Whiteness in Leadership**

Tribe and Bell (2018) stated that leadership by counselling psychologists may be demonstrated in various ways including challenging psychological practices and their governing theories which are often based on a White, middle-class, heteronormative perspective that does not adequately consider issues of diversity. This review, however, found no specific examples of leadership models being utilised for the exploration of Whiteness which may speak to the lack of leadership in this area. An existing leadership model for counselling psychologists that appears to be transferable to working with Whiteness is White and Shullman's (2010) ambiguity-centred learning leadership skillset. The components of the model that seem particularly pertinent are (1) fostering a sense of curiosity and motivation by mystery (engaging in difficult learning by encouraging us to move away from a preoccupation with a fear of failure), (2) Risk tolerance (being brave enough to act without all the information), (3) future scanning (the ability to ask probing questions at the right times, even when an area is outside of acknowledged expertise), and (4) tenacity (the ability to feel at home with conflicting ideas, approaches, and realities). When applied, it may help to actualise a commitment to social justice, utilise feelings of uncertainty and doubt, and guide leadership during processes where such feelings may be prevalent. This model encourages leadership across all levels, from trainees to policymakers which could potentially provide the broad approach necessary to have a real impact. The application of this model appears to be an area of Whiteness scholarship that could benefit from further research.

This section has highlighted some issues that counselling psychologists may face in professional practice including emotional barriers to addressing Whiteness, limited



awareness of Whiteness compared to REM peers, restrictions imposed by the pressure to appear competent, unstructured and ambiguous conversations about 'racial' issues in supervision, and the absence of a Whiteness focused leadership model. Although training programmes have shown promising results in developing how therapists respond to the various constructs of Whiteness, it is unclear if these benefits extend to qualified counselling psychologists as most published research was conducted with trainees on undergraduate and masters-level courses.

## **2.9 Exploring Whiteness with counselling psychologists**

Having considered theory and research on how Whiteness is addressed in the therapeutic context, the focus of the review will now turn to a selection of relevant studies on or around Whiteness and related areas conducted with counselling psychologists specifically to explore their experience including any challenges or barriers they may face when engaging with the topic. This particular focus is related to the purpose of the current study to better understand the relative silence and apparent lack of collective action in response to 'race' related disparities within the context of British CoP.

Having found a gap in the literature about White counselling psychologists' perspectives on Black colleagues' experiences of racism with White colleagues, Owen (2017) conducted ten interviews with White counselling psychologists working in academia to explore their experiences with racism and ally development. The author highlighted the importance of examining racism within this group to ascertain ways to address it, facilitate White 'racial' identity development, improve interracial interactions, and contribute towards training models for White counselling psychology trainees. Findings from an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the data revealed how racism and allyship manifested among the participants through the elucidation of five themes – (1) White privilege as a mode of emotional distance from the reality of racism (including deflection from discussing 'race' and racism and harmful cognitive schemas that utilise White privilege), (2) difficulty engaging in White allyship, (3) awareness of personal privilege and recognising personal capacity for racism, (4) advocacy and (5) perceptions of racism in their environments (including recognition of

insidious and systemic racism, emotional reactions to racism, and intellectualised knowledge).

The participants displayed varying levels of awareness and acceptance around racism, some rejected it and engaged their identity as White anti-racist allies to partake in anti-racist advocacy, whilst others expressed colour-blind attitudes or emotionally distanced themselves from racism by utilising deflection and rationalising to defend academia as a White field. The findings suggest that being a qualified counselling psychologist does not necessarily result in more awareness of racism or a more developed White 'racial' identity indicating that graduate training in this area could be insufficient. Owen (2017) emphasised the significance of these results in the context of CoP as a field that explicitly articulates its commitment to social justice, diversity and multiculturalism highlighting a discrepancy between these values and the criticism that CoP offers mostly intellectualism to social justice movements (Ivey & Collins, 2003). The author stressed that further research on White counselling psychologists' perspectives on racism is necessary to identify areas for growth and intervention considering that they are responsible for training new counselling psychologists and producing research reflective of CoP values.

Owen (2017) highlighted that despite CoP's espoused values and the fact that many White counselling psychologists are well-meaning, highly educated and do not want to perpetuate racism, the discipline exists within a societal context built on White supremacy, White privilege and ethnocentric monoculturalism which makes it impossible to eradicate racism and White privilege within the profession. Therefore, Owen (2017) asserted that White counselling psychologists must contemplate how they may unintentionally perpetuate racism and White privilege, work on reducing their capacity for racism, develop their allyship and strive to make oppressive systems of Whiteness visible so that they can be challenged. This study had a small sample size of self-selected participants who were willing to discuss 'race' and racism and is restricted to White counselling psychologists working in academic contexts, so generalisability is limited. Owen (2017) noted the low response and participation rate (15%) of White counselling psychologists invited to take part in the study and speculated that this could be due to a lack of interest, apathy, or discomfort regarding

racism. For these reasons, it could be difficult to engage counselling psychologists who may want to avoid participating in research around these issues.

Noting that little is known about dominant group members engaged in multicultural research, Spanierman et al. (2017) interviewed twelve White counselling psychologists who were identified by REM peers as having made significant contributions to the field of multicultural psychology as White allies. The interviews explored how participants thought about and understood their experiences, roles, and responsibilities in this field and how they viewed the influence of their positionality within Whiteness on their work. A consensual qualitative research analysis identified ten domains, two of which related to Whiteness explicitly: (1) understanding Whiteness: understanding and utilising White privilege to address 'racial' injustices, understanding Whiteness alongside other social and ethnic identities, acknowledging internalised racism and the ongoing struggle against powerful racist socialisation processes to develop a healthy White 'racial' identity, and recognising Whiteness as fluid based on other social identities and the social context, and (2) impact of Whiteness on one's professional work: using White privilege to challenge and educate other White people about racism, being transparent about struggles with White 'racial' identity development, normalising struggles, encouraging risk-taking and mistake-making, conducting empirical investigation into the extensive impact of White privilege and concerns about their perception to REM people.

Other relevant findings included the influence of formative experiences such as family values or personal experience of discrimination, the importance of critical incidents (e.g. witnessing a racist event or having a meaningful interaction with an REM peer), experiences in higher education, building meaningful cross-racial relationships, having support from mentors, role models and likeminded colleagues within and beyond CoP, utilising reflective exercises such as journaling and taking a process-oriented instead of a fixed-goal approach to their development. Participants also spoke of their willingness to engage and work through difficult interactions and their ability to tolerate a high level of uncertainty and risk of failure whilst continuing to resist 'racial' oppression. Participants identified challenges with White CoP colleagues including ignorance of systemic oppression, the view that multicultural concerns are a niche/unscientific topic and feelings of being devalued and rejected by these peers.

Most participants referenced the challenging emotional toll of the work but also reported the rewards including enhanced authenticity and greater personal and professional growth. The authors stressed the need for a comprehensive conceptual model that can be utilised for training White students to develop and utilise a multicultural lens in their professional work and the need for research on how counselling psychologists can most effectively engage in difficult dialogues.

Spanierman et al's. (2017) findings highlight the importance of engaging in an ongoing process of struggle rather than seeking a sense of mastery or competence that is alluded to in some multicultural 'competency' models and demonstrates that even those who are identified as White allies by REM colleagues still have trouble engaging with Whiteness suggesting that this is a typical response to the phenomenon. Although insightful, the data is retrospective so does not capture the live process of change as it occurred over time which means that key experiences during the participants' development as allies may have been lost. It is unclear how the researchers approached questions on Whiteness i.e., if specific constructs such as White privilege were asked about explicitly or if they were raised spontaneously by participants and the authors' focus on multiple topics (i.e., Whiteness, multicultural psychology, and social justice) may have restricted the depth of exploration. The sample was narrow and consisted of counselling psychologists with significant knowledge and expertise on the topics under investigation so may not apply to counselling psychologists with less specific experience. Most of the sample were academics (10 out of 12) who were not in clinical practice at the time of the interviews which may limit the scope of the findings.

The two above studies compare findings from White counselling psychologists with a spectrum of experience and engagement with 'race' related topics which provides a valuable contribution to the field. The inferences that can be drawn from these findings, like much of the research discussed in this review, may be limited when it comes to counselling psychologists working in a British context as most studies were conducted in the United States. Although British CoP is influenced by American CoP, there is considerable diversity between the countries' historical and societal environments and how CoP developed in each of these contexts (Jones Nielson & Nicholas, 2016). 'Race' related research conducted with White counselling psychologists in Britain

could help to deepen understanding of how Whiteness is experienced by counselling psychologists working in this setting specifically so that contextually relevant implications for practice can be ascertained. Unfortunately, this review did not find any British studies conducted with qualified White counselling psychologists. It did, however, find two related British studies that offer important insight into this area.

Campbell-Balcom and Martin-Berg (2019) utilised IPA to explore six counselling psychologists' subjective experiences of anti-discriminatory practice (ADP), specifically examining how they utilise self-awareness of their biasing and prejudicial beliefs and attitudes in their therapeutic practice around matters of difference and diversity. The results displayed three themes: (1) views toward ADP (including definitions, tensions between theory and implementation, and the facilitative impact of personal experience of discrimination and oppression on development), (2) reflections on the relationship between self-awareness and ADP (including utilising self-awareness to recognise and manage the ongoing potential to stereotype or discriminate based upon conscious and unconscious beliefs and attitudes, and understanding the societal and relational context that such beliefs and attitudes originate from), and (3) actively working with difference and diversity in the therapy room (including the influence of self-awareness on ADP, the importance of reflective practice to aid self-awareness, and the use of humanistic counselling skills to support practice).

The results suggested that although participants had positive attitudes toward ADP and wanted to practice in an anti-discriminatory way, they experienced tension and uncertainty around how to apply ADP and commented on the lack of specifics and clarity in professional guidelines that leave it open to interpretation. This lack of articulation and the sense of ambiguity that it creates left participants feeling uncertain, hesitant, and defensive against ... "a nebulous, but highly idealised construct of ADP." (p. 11). The participants spoke of the need to acknowledge and accept human fallibility in response to this ambiguity through the concept of the 'good enough psychologist' so that they could take a constructive and compassionate approach towards noticing potential biases and working effectively with them. Participants stated that they try to bridge the inevitable differences and the interplay of multiple, complex identities present within the therapeutic relationship by utilising CoP's active humanistic and

phenomenological ethics and values which include creating a collaborative and accepting therapeutic environment, practising with congruence, and appreciating the client's unique subjective experience, individuality, and context.

Participants also expressed that an important part of their ADP was the opportunity to cultivate self-awareness through honest and open exploration of feelings such as frustration and confusion in reflective practice settings such as supervision, personal therapy, or during informal consultation with peers to reduce potential harm to clients through pathologising or discrimination. Campbell-Balcom and Martin-Berg (2019) stated that the study's findings suggest that self-awareness and reflective practice underpin the core counselling skills rooted in CoP's humanistic and phenomenological value base and that this provides a foundation for a CoP-led ADP that reduces the impact of potentially harmful beliefs and attitudes and bridges the theory-practice divide. Although these qualities may be facilitative, the impetus for ADP development seemed to come from individual practitioners without wider professional guidance. There are obvious similarities between this finding and criticisms of organisational level responses to Whiteness found elsewhere in the literature. However, the decision not to focus on specific aspects of difference and diversity (e.g. 'race' or sexuality) and the lack of homogeneity within the participant sample seems to have resulted in a broad research question which did not clarify which aspects of ADP the participants struggled with or if this was their response to difference more generally. This limits the conclusions that can be drawn regarding specific aspects of difference and diversity and missed the opportunity to explore the impact of participants' marginalised or privileged identities on their experience of difference and diversity.

Taking a specific focus on 'race', O'Driscoll et al. (2016) conducted a discursive inquiry to analyse the discourses that a group of White British trainee counselling psychologists drew upon when constructing their experience of (1) training, personal development, and practice around 'racial' difference and (2) when discussing their potential for 'racial' prejudice within the therapeutic encounter. Trainees between their second and fourth year of training took part in both a 1:1 interview and a focus group to allow them to speak more freely in one format if they found the other inhibiting. Participants self-facilitated the focus groups to limit the intrusion of the researchers' prior assumptions on the data collection. A discursive analysis revealed that as the

participants explored their experiences, they interchangeably occupied one of three discursive fields (bodies of discourse informed by specific ideological principles): (1) colour-blindness (excluding 'racial' difference and by extension the existence of racism and its consequences) (2) interculturalism (White-centric generalisations about groups of people who are 'racially' different that create stereotypical assumptions/culturally prescribed ways of understanding people/presentations and subtly maintain 'racial' power imbalances) and (3) pluralism (a focus on value-free openness and understanding individual experience/the uniqueness of the other without denying or privileging difference).

The authors identified inconsistencies and ideological dilemmas in the participants' discourse as they interchangeably occupied discursive fields, regularly contradicted themselves and alternated between privileging and excluding difference depending on which professional representation appeared to be 'at stake'. For example, they attempted to balance their aspiration to operate from a pluralistic position viewed as congruent with the humanistic values CoP by valuing the uniqueness of the individual, and a need to seem professionally competent by drawing on generalised understandings of 'racial' groups (interculturalism), and the desire to be seen as offering a prejudice-free relationship to all (colour-blindness). The authors argued that the evidence of discursive co-habitation in the data suggests that the ideologies informing the participants' efforts to reduce racism and racial prejudice are ill-defined and not distinct from one another. O'Driscoll et al. (2016) stated that the complex interplay between these three discursive fields and their inherent ideologies may be reflective of a wider state of confusion exhibited by the field of CoP as the result of its complex, multifaceted epistemological roots (e.g. fusing of modern and postmodern theories) which leave much open to interpretation. This issue is arguably exacerbated by the lack of a clear discursive position being communicated by training institutions or the broader field of CoP which leaves trainees to devise a theory of practice for themselves and to carry the risk of combining epistemologically incompatible ideologies that may inadvertently reproduce racism and 'racial' prejudice.

Although the study did not specifically explore Whiteness, it did focus on 'race' from the perspective of White British trainee counselling psychologists and as such, it is an important contribution to an otherwise limited landscape of research with this group. It

is noticeable that Whiteness was not mentioned by the participants even though they were specifically asked about 'racial' difference between them and REM clients. This could speak to the invisible nature of Whiteness to White people and a focus on the Other rather than on the self that is evident in the literature on Whiteness. O'Driscoll et al. (2016) stated that as researchers, they were keen not to let their views about the importance of White individuals working in racialised contexts engaging in self-examination drive the data collection process. The effort to remain objective in an attempt not to bias the data collection process removed the opportunity to deepen exploration by utilising the subjective experience of the researchers.

The study's focus on trainees instead of qualified counselling psychologists makes it difficult to ascertain if the findings could be associated with incomplete training and limited experience. Further exploration with qualified counselling psychologists may offer more clarity on whether this inconsistent interplay between discursive positions is also evident in the discourse of qualified counselling psychologists or is only present in a training context. If this experience does extend to qualified counselling psychologists, then it could reveal more about the potentially complicated confusion of discourses and associated ideologies within counselling psychology that may contribute to the lack of response to 'racial' disparities from within the field.

These two studies provide important context to the study of Whiteness within British CoP. Of particular interest is the apparent lack of clarity either from training or discipline-specific guidelines available to the participants in their work with difference and evidence of epistemological and ideological inconsistencies within the discipline. The latter point is evident even between the two studies. For example, whilst Campbell-Balcom and Martin-Berg (2019) cited CoP's humanistic and phenomenological ethics and values as a helpful remedy to the lack of guidance within the profession, O'Driscoll et al. (2016) criticised humanistic psychology's focus on equality for its neglect of significant factors that are the cause of inequalities and its use to justify a colour-blind approach. This criticism is sustained by Moller (2011) who challenged the British CoP's profession's identification with phenomenology and humanistic values as "overly rigid and often irrelevant" (p.8) citing that a commitment to diversity and multicultural psychology in keeping with an American approach would provide a more promising and socially relevant identity for the discipline.



## 2.10 Summary and rationale

This literature review has added necessary context and framing to evidence of 'racial' disparities in mental health and psychological settings in the UK and the relative silence in response to these issues within British CoP literature and policy. It has presented and critiqued Whiteness from a range of angles including its various formulations, theories, and constructs, considered how it interacts with identity, and how it can operate in professional practice. Research conducted with counselling psychologists has suggested varying levels of awareness and acceptance around 'race' related issues, struggles with the emotional and interpersonal dynamics of the work, a broad and ambiguous understanding of multicultural issues, and feelings of tension, uncertainty and risk around how to work with difference in practice.

These issues appear to reflect a lack of specifics and clarity in professional guidelines and training. The findings of the two relevant studies conducted in a British context suggest that counselling psychologists working in this setting respond to this lack by defining a method of practice based on their perception and interpretation of CoP's ethics, values, and ideologies, sometimes in ill-defined, non-distinct and epistemologically incompatible ways that could inadvertently reproduce racism and 'racial' prejudice. Although insightful, these findings do not include the perspective of qualified White British counselling psychologists' experiences of Whiteness so the inferences one can draw for this group are speculative. This presents a gap in the literature that the current study aims to contribute to.

Honing in on the experience of qualified White British counselling psychologists is justified from several angles. Firstly, focusing on the experience of counselling psychologists racialised as White is in keeping with the emphasis that REM scholars have placed on White researchers garnering a better understanding of the 'majority' group rather than solely focusing on the 'minority' group to address issues of 'racial' oppression (Sue & Sue, 2019) and to turn the focus of their research away from REM groups and towards themselves and their own communities to address White racism in research (e.g. Helms, 1993; Sue, 1993). Secondly, focusing on the experience of British counselling psychologists acknowledges historical socio-political differences between countries such as their colonial pasts. Thirdly, focusing on the experience of

Whiteness for those who are qualified rather than trainees will illuminate the issues that therapists who are currently in practice face. These findings will have implications for those still in training whereas research conducted with trainees exclusively could be attributable to incomplete training.

Finally, focusing on counselling psychologists as opposed to therapists from related professions acknowledges that CoP has a distinct identity and value base. CoP differs from clinical psychology due to its humanistic, reflective, and relational focus as evidenced by the necessity for personal therapy in CoP training and the positioning of the therapeutic relationship as the vehicle for understanding and alleviating psychological distress (BPS, 2019). It also differs from disciplines such as counselling and psychotherapy due to the centrality of formulation and a practitioner-researcher approach (HCPC, 2023; Swanepoel, 2012) as evidenced by the doctoral research component to training and the profession's legally protected title. There will be differences in how Whiteness is formulated and addressed based on these distinctions that will benefit from a specific focus.

In summary, focusing on qualified White British counselling psychologists' experience of Whiteness increases homogeneity and ensures that outcomes and implications are relevant to our field specifically. This is important when considering what is contributing to the relative silence on 'race' related issues and the failure to make Whiteness explicit in various areas of CoP including the impact of Whiteness on professional practice and identity.

## **2.11 Research aims**

The current study aims to explore the lived experience of Whiteness for a group of White British counselling psychologists to uncover how they understand, recognise, interpret, and make sense of Whiteness, what informs or influences this sense-making process, and how they view the influence of their positionality within Whiteness including any challenges or barriers they may face personally or professionally when engaging with the topic. These aims are related to the purpose of the current study to better understand the relative silence and apparent lack of collective action to respond to 'race' related disparities from within the field. Due to the paucity of British literature on the experiences of Whiteness from the perspective of qualified counselling

psychologists who are racialised as White, exploring and locating their subjective experiences in the historical psycho-socio-political context and the professional context (within which these experiences are embedded) may help to deepen our understanding of this complex and multi-faceted phenomenon and highlight practical and meaningful learning that could inform how we respond to 'race' related issues in practice.

### **2.12 Formulation of the research question**

Due to the array of theoretical constructs presented in the literature, to pick one at random as the focus for this study e.g., White privilege, seems somewhat arbitrary and may limit the insights that could be gained from the current study to one of the researcher's choosing rather than allowing the phenomenon to emerge spontaneously. Therefore, the focus of the research question will invite contributors to construct Whiteness for themselves from their personal and professional lived experiences. This has led to the formulation of the below research question.

### **2.13 Research question**

What is the personal and professional experience of Whiteness for White British counselling psychologists?

### **2.14 Chapter summary**

This chapter critically reviewed the available literature on Whiteness, including its limitations, culminating in the identification of a gap in the literature and the formulation of a research question. The focus will now turn to the implementation of a research design to answer this question.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter begins with a reflection on the main research paradigms in counselling psychology (CoP) and how they developed. It will present the conceptual, ontological, and epistemological position of the current study and introduce phenomenology as both a philosophy and a research methodology. The historical and conceptual divergence of phenomenology will be considered, culminating in the presentation of a hermeneutic phenomenological approach inspired by van Manen (2016). Attention will be given to key aspects of the research design including recruitment, interview protocol development and analysis. Finally, this chapter illustrates the reflexive process at the heart of the study, as well as attending to ethical issues within the research. In keeping with this study's hermeneutic phenomenological style and underpinning epistemology, some parts of this chapter are presented in the first-person.

### **3.2 Research paradigms for counselling psychology research**

Counselling psychologists often work in settings where evidence-based practice including empirically supported protocol is considered superior (Hanley et al., 2012). The scientist-practitioner approach is central to the identity of CoP, however, the definition of what constitutes 'scientifically valid' evidence is arguably wider than for other disciplines (Douglas et al., 2016). Corrie and Callanan (2001) conceptualised the scientist-practitioner model as a spectrum, placing CoP in a position of holistically utilising evidence based on the specific nature of inquiry rather than being engaged in the practice of trying to predict and control phenomena. The scientist-practitioner aspect of the CoP identity is balanced by a reflective-practitioner component. This is expressed through the counselling psychologist's 'use of self' i.e., the practice of reflecting on and evaluating experiences and decisions to further inform the therapeutic or research process. This specific combination of scientific and reflective-practitioner identities characterises research and practice in CoP (HCPC, 2016).

Guba and Lincoln's (1994) four-paradigm schema illustrate the philosophical approaches to research in CoP: (1) positivism, (2) post-positivism, (3) constructivism-interpretivism and (4) critical theory. Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated that research in psychology has historically been underpinned by positivist and postpositivist paradigms. Positivist researchers take an ontological position of naïve realism, ascribing to a belief of an objective, 'true' reality that is both observable and measurable. Through their experimental research designs and hypothetico-deductive methodologies, they seek to explain, predict, and control phenomena (Ponterotto et al., 2017). Postpositivist researchers also acknowledge an objective reality but take an ontological position of critical realism, ascribing to the belief that phenomena are dynamic so observations and measurements will always be imperfect (Ponterotto et al., 2017).

Discursive and phenomenological research procedures developed over time as interest grew in the role of language, including its effect on and formation of reality and how meaning is constructed (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). However, as the emphasis was originally on pure description of social phenomena, these remained loyal to a positivist paradigm (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2002). However, as psychological researchers became more interested in understanding and not just describing social phenomena, the role of interpretation developed and gradually shifted towards postmodern paradigms such as constructivism–interpretivism and critical theory (Ponterotto, 2005a).

The constructivism-interpretivism paradigm seeks to understand the lived experience of a phenomenon. It takes an ontologically relativist position, assuming the existence of numerous, subjectively constructed realities that are influenced by contexts formed of experiences, knowledge, perception, social environment, and the research itself. These subjective realities may be accessed, understood, and co-constructed through a deep, reflective process stimulated by a dialogue between researcher and participant. The critical–ideological paradigm also ascribes to the concept of constructed realities and inherent lived experiences, but it emphasises that these exist within power relations entrenched in socio-historical-political contexts. Research conducted from this paradigm centres on the values of the researcher and aims to

emancipate participants from oppression through dialectical interaction (Ponterotto, 2005a).

### **3.3 Conceptual, ontological and epistemological positioning of the current study**

Integral to CoP's approach to research, regardless of paradigm, is philosophical consistency and a clear operating paradigm from inception (Ponterotto et al., 2017). I identify my position as ontologically relativist and epistemologically constructivist. Relativist in that I reject the notion of 'absolute truth' and recognise that there are a multitude of interpretations that may be applied to the world (Schwandt, 1994) and constructivist in my acknowledgement that knowledge and meaning are constructed and subject to human perception and change as we interact with the world. Informed by this philosophical position, I am drawn to phenomenological perspectives because of the view that 'truth' is a subjective perception constructed through the course of personal experience (Langdrige, 2007). This is congruent with my view of the phenomenon of Whiteness i.e., that it may be constructed and experienced in numerous ways, dependent on factors such as how individuals have been racialised and the interaction of intersectional aspects of their identities (Crenshaw, 1991).

I am specifically drawn to Heidegger's (1927/1962) interpretative view of phenomenology which emphasises attending closely to that which 'shows itself'. Heidegger (1927/1962) introduced the concept of 'Dasein', the idea that humans make interpretations and attribute meaning to the world around them and consequently create the world through Being in it. To take an interpretative phenomenological position to research is to acknowledge that it is not realistically possible to completely 'bracket off' one's own life experience and proclivity to interpret as one comes to know a phenomenon. It acknowledges the researcher as an interpretative being informed by their own life experiences who will affect how a phenomenon emerges from the research process (Langdrige, 2007). The benefit of an approach that allows for co-construction between participant *and* researcher is that it may aid the discovery of meaning that a participant may not be able to articulate alone (Dibley et al., 2020). This is congruent with the values of co-construction and intersubjectivity inherent in CoP (Kasket, 2011).

### **3.4 Research design**

#### **3.4.1 Selecting a methodological approach**

Two methodologies were considered for the current study that would meet the requirements for discovering and exploring the lived experience of Whiteness from a constructivist epistemological position: narrative analysis and hermeneutic phenomenological analysis, the suitability of each will now be considered.

Narrative researchers explore narrative accounts of experience to illuminate how individuals construct and order narratives about their lives to create meaning (Willig & Rogers, 2017). Narrative researchers are interested in the structure and form of the stories that individuals tell, referred to as 'story grammar' (Langdrige, 2007). Researchers may apply interpretative perspectives to a narrative by working through a text repeatedly and asking various questions concerning different features, including the story type, direction, tone, language, key themes, and people's positions within the narrative (Langdrige, 2007). Although narrative researchers differ in their approaches, the main aim is to present a systematic and clear analysis that illuminates the structure, functions, and implications of an individual's narrative as opposed to focusing on how they experience phenomena (Griffin & May, 2012). A narrative approach may capture something of the experience of Whiteness, but this form of inquiry would focus on how participants organise their experience to make meaning from it rather than on an immediate engagement with their lived experience. Although storytelling and elicitation of memories may provide useful insight into the experience of Whiteness, these processes are not the focus of my research.

Phenomenology describes and understands phenomena as lived experience (Dibley et al., 2020). Phenomenological researchers are concerned with the immediate experience and structural analysis of what is most common, familiar, and self-evident to construct an animated, evocative textual description of individual's actions, behaviours, and intentions as they meet them in their lifeworld (van Manen, 2016). Phenomenological researchers seek to uncover how individuals experience, describe, interpret, and understand a phenomenon as it presents itself to consciousness (Dibley et al., 2020). Phenomenological research allows the emergence of new or overlooked meanings (Merriam, 2002) and facilitates a deeper understanding of existing theory

(Haverkamp & Young, 2007) which may be useful to research on Whiteness in a British CoP context where the topic appears to have been under-explored. Lavery (2003) states that to truly understand and engage in phenomenological research requires an appreciation of its philosophical underpinnings to illuminate how the meaning of human experience is theorised. These underpinnings will now be explored.

The word 'phenomenology' is derived from the Greek words *phainómenon* (that which appears/shows itself) and *lógos* (study/make something manifest) (Friedrichsen & Burchfield, 1996). Therefore, the literal meaning of phenomenology is 'the study of things shown'. There are two schools of thought that form the epistemological underpinnings of phenomenology, the analytical and the continental. These are fundamentally different from one another in their philosophical assumptions. Analytical philosophy is focused on logic, reason, and objectivity, whereas continental philosophy is focused on the synthesis and the relationships between things (Levy, 2003). There are two branches of continental phenomenology, transcendental and interpretative, both will now be explored.

Transcendental phenomenology was formulated by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), who rejected the idea that only empirical science can produce one fixed 'truth'. Instead, Husserl (1931/1999) claimed that experience is the definitive basis of knowledge, and that lived experience is the most superior form. Husserl's interest in *what* individuals know through their directed awareness/consciousness or *intentionality* towards an object or event pushed analysis beyond sheer sensory perception towards experiences of thought, emotion, and memory (Dibley et al., 2020). Husserl (1931/1999) argued that a lived experience of a phenomenon consists of features or 'essences' that can generally be perceived by other individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and that these can purportedly be identified and developed into a generalisable description that represents the phenomenon's true nature. Husserl (1931/1999) purported that in the pursuit of these 'essences', researchers must effectively suspend their own lived experience to achieve a state of 'transcendental subjectivity'. Within this state, there is an ongoing assessment of the impact of the researcher on the inquiry so that biases and preconceptions may be neutralised, preventing them from informing the descriptions offered by participants (Neubauer et al, 2019). This is achieved through a series of 'reductions' including the process of



'bracketing' known as 'epoché'. To achieve the level of bracketing necessary to successfully engage in this approach, a researcher must set aside the entirety of the world's content, including their own body (Staiti, 2012).

Interpretative phenomenology was formulated by Husserl's student Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Although initially Heidegger was aligned with Husserl's work, they later came to challenge key aspects of it, including the fundamental focus of phenomenological inquiry. Heidegger moved beyond the description of experience towards seeking the meanings that are entrenched in everyday occurrences. Heidegger (1927/1962) was interested in what it means to 'Be' and purported that individuals are 'always already' in possession of an understanding of themselves, even if they are not consciously aware of this understanding. Heidegger viewed reality and consciousness as perpetually influenced by an individual's lifeworld (constructed of lived experiences, personal history, background knowledge, culture and the wider world) positing that an inquirer cannot investigate 'things in their appearing' whilst being bracketed off to the way that they identify the essence of a phenomenon through this lifeworld (Langdrige, 2007). Heidegger (1927/1962) contended that if all human experience is influenced, informed by, and interpreted through an individual's lifeworld, phenomenology must go beyond description to interpret phenomena.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a component of interpretative phenomenology based on the notion of change, i.e., the world is constantly altering, and people change; therefore, their interpretations of the world change (Lavery, 2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology is concerned with meaning and has two facets: (1) the interpretative process and (2) grasping the essence of a phenomenon. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach engages with descriptive, textual accounts of a phenomenon provided by contributors and attempts to reach beneath surface-level awareness to discover meaning, allow for interpretation, and understand the deeper levels of human experience. Hermeneutic phenomenological research seeks an understanding of how the lifeworld influences the interpretation of these experiences and how meanings and interpretations influence individuals' choices (Lavery, 2003).

Hermeneutic phenomenological researchers interpret contributors' textual accounts whilst acknowledging the impact of context (Palmer, 1969). Heidegger (1927/1962)

argued that context does not pre-determine subjective experience because individuals have a 'situated freedom' i.e., they have freedom in their choices, but these are *restricted* by their contexts. The role of the researcher in hermeneutic phenomenology then is to interpret the meanings found in relation to phenomena rather than emphasising essences alone. This occurs through engagement with and interpretation of data, leading to the discovery of themes. Unlike with transcendental phenomenological approaches, hermeneutic phenomenological researchers do not attempt to completely 'bracket off' their subjective perspective. They acknowledge that they cannot step out of their lifeworld as they engage with a phenomenon because their subjectivity and knowledge are precisely how they come into their Being-in-the-world.

Hermeneutic phenomenological researchers openly acknowledge their preconceptions and assumptions whilst reflectively incorporating their subjectivity into the process of analysis (Moran, 2000). Rather than being viewed as an obstacle, the researcher's experience, empathy, and knowledge are conceptualised as valuable guides to inquiry that can help to better understand experience (Dibley et al., 2020). To retain this value, researchers must work reflexively through a process of 'hermeneutic alertness' when collecting data from participants (van Manen, 2016). This consists of (a) the ability to facilitate an ongoing conversation about a lived experience whilst being present in the moment (b) stepping back to interpret and reflect on the meaning of an experience as it develops and (c) contemplating how they came to make an interpretation (instead of accepting pre-conceptions and interpretations at face value) (van Manen, 2016).

Two interpretative phenomenological approaches to analysis were considered for use in the current study: Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and Hermeneutic Phenomenology analysis (HPA) inspired by van Manen (2016). Although they both draw on similar philosophical influences, both explore phenomena through the interpretation of lived experience, and both view the researcher and participant as co-constructors of the meaning-making process (Roberts, 2013), IPA has been criticised for having only a tenuous link with philosophical phenomenology (van Manen, 2017a; Zahavi, 2020).

Each approach has distinct aims, analytical processes, and outcomes. For example, IPA aims to study and develop a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon associated with the unique lived experience of individual social actors (Jeong & Othman, 2016) and has defined steps for analysis whilst HPA focuses on understanding individuals' lived experience of a phenomenon to access their sense of their Being-in-the-world and how their Being transforms. The analytical process in HPA revolves around an engagement with phenomenological principles rather than 'slavishly' adhering to prescriptive analytical rules (van Manen, 2016). By not imposing a particular direction or agenda onto the analytical process (either by the researcher or by analytical method), HPA may allow additional space for a phenomenon to emerge.

Although both approaches acknowledge the importance of the researcher's subjective experience and corresponding reflexivity in the process of analysis, HPA arguably places even more emphasis on subjectivity through the practice of writing and re-writing phenomenological paragraphs. This practice allows the researcher to be even more inclusive of whatever emerges from a contributor's account (van Manen, 2016). An extra focus on subjectivity is especially important when a White researcher studies Whiteness because their own lived experience including their biases, beliefs, and assumptions, will inform their interpretation of the phenomenon. Being extra attuned to the influence of subjectivity allows phenomena analysed with HPA to emerge in a particularly sensitive way in the hopes of accurately portraying the contributors' meaning-making process. A further differentiation between the two approaches is that whilst IPA examines the importance that an individual attaches to their own lived experience, HPA considers the lived experience within the overall condition of human existence. This additional focus on Being within conditions such as culture, history, corporeality, and human relationships aligns HPA with the current study's aims to explore how contributors create their Being in relation to Whiteness, within the context of their lifeworlds of which CoP is an integral part.

The following section will describe the data collection process and detail how van Manen's (2016) hermeneutic interpretative phenomenological method was employed for analysis.

### **3.4.2 Employing a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology inspired by van Manen**

van Manen (2016) assimilated the principles of interpretative phenomenology with the interpretation of 'texts of lived experience' (hermeneutics), thereby developing a specific methodology. van Manen (2016) asserted that language reveals being within historical and cultural contexts and that human beings are best understood in the context of lifeworld. This hermeneutic phenomenological approach proposes that individuals are conscious of their reality and that their sense of it can be accessed through language. Methodological themes from the broad field of phenomenological scholarship serve as guidelines for inquiry for this research approach which are framed as a dynamic interplay between six activities:

- “(1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- (2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualise it;
- (3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterise the phenomenon;
- (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
- (5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole”

(van Manen, 2016, p.30)

Researchers utilising van Manen's (2016) approach are encouraged to engage with the method's process and to let phenomena emerge from the data through interpretation. Language provides data in the form of 'texts of lived experience' (usually transcripts of in-depth interviews) comprising of a reflective process between participant and researcher. The researcher analyses these texts by engaging in a process of 'meaning mining' practised through the art of writing and rewriting phenomenological paragraphs whilst interpreting the meaning of a lived experience or phenomenon. The aim is to isolate 'essential' themes known as 'structures of experience' that contain something expressive, meaningful, and thematic about a lived experience of a phenomenon. These themes are viewed as written interpretations of a lived experience that convey its essence and increase understanding of a

phenomenon. This process is facilitated by taking either one or a combination of approaches: (1) wholistic/sententious (studying the text as a whole) (2) selective/highlighting (identifying phrases, sentences or part-sentences that appear 'thematic' of the experience) or (3) detailed/line-by-line (considering each sentence and ascertaining which of them reveal something about the nature of the phenomenon) (van Manen, 2016).

### **3.5 Data collection**

#### **3.5.1 Recruitment process**

Sampling in hermeneutic phenomenological research is always purposive (Dibley et al., 2020) which involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals with experience related to a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Due to the heavy sampling of undergraduate and postgraduate students/trainees in the literature, qualified counselling psychologists were recruited. In keeping with its epistemological position, the current study does not seek to represent breadth, i.e., a universal lived experience of Whiteness, as each account is inherently subjective. Rather, the aim is to capture depth in the form of a rich description of the lived experience of Whiteness for this group of participants. Therefore, a homogenous sample was sought (contributors who self-identify as White British) whilst accommodating diverse representations within the defined boundary to enhance the description (Dibley et al., 2020).

Recruitment took place through advertisements in psychology newsletters, forums, social media platforms and professional networks. Uptake from general advertisements was low. This could be for any number of reasons, but the literature suggests that talking about Whiteness can be uncomfortable for White people due to fears of saying the wrong thing or appearing racist (Williams et al., 2022). Therefore, some individuals were contacted directly to invite them to contribute to the study. Once two contributors had been recruited, snowball sampling was utilised to recruit the rest, as is advised for recruitment around sensitive topics (Dibley et al., 2020). Two exclusion criteria were applied to the recruitment process: 1) those who do not identify as British and 2) those who have not been qualified for a minimum of two years. The rationale for implementing these criteria was to increase homogeneity and to ensure

that if recognised themes in the literature arose in the data e.g., anxiety, they would be less attributable to a lack of general experience. Once contributors agreed to participate, they were sent a consent form (Appendix G) and a demographic form (Appendix H).

### **3.5.2 Sample**

Recommended sample sizes in phenomenological research vary widely. Bartholomew et al. (2021) state that certain quality measures, such as epistemological and methodological consistency, may be a more useful guide when considering an adequate sample size. Based on considerations about the overall purpose of the research, the willingness of members of the targeted population to engage with the research and the depth and completeness of the data collected (Dibley et al., 2020), it was decided in conjunction with my supervisor, that a sample size of six provided sufficient data to answer the research question.

**Table 1:**

*Contributor Demographics*

<b>Assigned name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Preferred pronouns</b>	<b>Ethnic/cultural background</b>	<b>Sexuality</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>Religious affiliation</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Years qualified</b>	<b>Years practising</b>	<b>Sector</b>	<b>Average clients seen per moth</b>	<b>Training /CPD on 'race', culture and/or ethnicity</b>
Hannah	50s	Female	She/Her	White British	Heterosexual	Working-middle	Christian	CP	5-10	5-10	Private	10	50 hours
Tasmin	70s	Female	She/Her	English	Heterosexual	Middle	Christian	CP	15-20	15-20	Private	50	Small component of doctoral training about identity
Angela	60s	Female	She/Her	White British	Heterosexual	Omitted	None	CP	20-25	20-25	Charity/Private	50	Some training in Muslim Culture and Military Culture
Annabelle	40s	Female	She/Her	Mixed European	Heterosexual	Working-middle	Muslim	CP	5-10	5-10	Private	50	A few workshops
Rob	50s	Male	He/His	White British	Heterosexual	Working-middle	Buddhist	CP	5-10	5-10	Private	15	CPD events
Patrick	50s	Male	He/His	White British	Homosexual	Middle	None	CP	5-10	0-5	Private	30	Very little

### **3.5.3 Interview setting and protocol**

Due to ongoing safety concerns amidst the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of recruitment and data collection, interviews took place via Microsoft Teams. The camera function was utilised to help retain some of the benefits of a face-to-face interview including establishing a connection with the contributors and allowing some observation of body language/facial expression and other non-verbal cues. Interviews lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. Contributors were offered the opportunity to have a separate discussion prior to the interview to establish rapport and increase comfort with the format although nobody requested to utilise this. To put contributors at ease and increase the likelihood of collecting descriptive data that is rich in essence, a prelude to the interview protocol was included that referenced the current literature, emphasised that there are no right or wrong answers and expressed the researcher's interest in the contributors' unique lived experience, regardless of their level of familiarity with the topic of Whiteness.

The choice of interview questions can influence the type of data that is collected (Langdrige, 2007). The interview protocol was carefully designed to be conducive to a constructivist, phenomenological approach. Various questions about the experience of Whiteness were included to support exploration and ensure that a rich description was captured. A question that incorporated 'artifact elicitation' was utilised to give the contributors the option of expressing their experience in an alternative way. Artifact elicitation is based on the idea that an object can embody the knowledge and attitudes of its creator (Douglas et al., 2015; Seidman, 2006) and is recommended in the study of Whiteness (Corces-Zimmerman & Guida, 2019). Such alternative methods of exploration are supported by van Manen's (2016) approach. In acknowledgement of the possibility of conflicting agendas between me and the contributors, the interview concluded with an open question inviting contributors to discuss any aspect of Whiteness they chose. Contributors were also invited to write and send further reflections after the interview if they wished to which one contributor chose to do.

### **3.5.4 Pilot interview**

A pilot interview was conducted with a retired White British counselling psychologist to trial the overall format and to get feedback. This contributor offered valuable



feedback on the tone of some of the recruitment material, namely, to emphasise the co-creator role of the contributors, which was not conveyed in the standardised university templates that had been utilised. Based on this, some amendments were made to the interview preamble, namely making it more congruent with the phenomenological style of the methodology. A prompt was also added to one of the questions to explore the experience of Whiteness during the context of the interview.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

van Manen (2016) does not offer a particular procedure for analysis as such, instead emphasising an analytical attitude that is insightful, reflective, sensitive to language and open to experience so that the essence of a phenomenon may emerge. Heidegger (1927/1962) spoke of phenomenological reflection as following paths towards a “clearing” (p.171) where the essential nature of a phenomenon is revealed. van Manen’s (2016) method of hermeneutic analysis allows the researcher to utilise their comparable human experience with that of the contributor to conduct a structural analysis of what is most common, familiar, and self-evident. The aim of the analysis is to construct an essential, evocative description of human experience as the contributors meet it in their lifeworld.

The interview data from the current study was transcribed and then analysed utilising a selective/highlighting approach. In his book ‘Researching lived experience’ van Manen (2016) illustrates the meaning-mining process and the creation of phenomenological reflections which was used as a guide to analysis. Each transcript was read several times, and initial phenomenological statements were noted beside highlighted sections (Appendix O). The transcripts were analysed through a ‘hermeneutic circle’, a process of reflecting on individual parts before relating them back to the whole and vice versa. Any presuppositions towards the meaning of a word or the significance of a phrase were contemplated within the overall evolving meaning of the transcripts (Dibley et al., 2020) and I continuously recognised and challenged my presuppositions, assumptions, and background knowledge. Once some common thematic elements of the initial phenomenological reflections were observed, initial primary themes were written down on individual pieces of paper and grouped. The excerpts were also printed and placed alongside the corresponding themes to explicate their essence and ensure that the meaning-making process remained faithful

to the contributors' original descriptions of the phenomenon (Appendix P). The individual thematic groups were considered alongside each other, the focus switching between individual themes and what they were uncovering about the wider phenomenon.

Eventually, primary themes were grouped into emergent themes (Appendix Q). The thematic groups were refined continuously, once new patterns emerged, theme labels were reviewed again, and the groups were reorganised. Each step of the analysis evolved spontaneously out of the one before as opposed to being predetermined. Reflexivity was continuously incorporated into the analysis. For example, when I experienced feelings of frustration and resistance within the analytical process, I considered what they conveyed about the nature of Whiteness. As part of the interpretation process, parts of the transcripts were rewritten and eventually, new paragraphs containing meaning or 'hermeneutic reductions' were developed. These form the basis of Chapter 4: Analysis.

### **3.7 Reflexivity and rigour**

I acknowledge that I affect the research process in keeping with my constructivist position and HPA methodology. Qualitative researchers must exercise personal, methodological, and epistemological reflexivity to critically reflect on the impact of their subjectivity and to increase the credibility and rigour of the research process (Dibley et al., 2020; Kasket, 2011). Dillard (2000) emphasised that each time a researcher engages in research, they are (re)searching themselves all over again in addition to the research topic. Establishing a reflexive process supports researchers to be conscious and transparent about the impact of their questions, methods and beliefs, which adds value to analysis and interpretation (Langridge, 2007). As a researcher who is racialised as White, I do not believe that it is possible to step outside of my own experience of Whiteness in an attempt at objectivity as this is what led me to the topic, informed the design of the interview protocol and guided how I interpreted meaning during analysis. Fortunately, the validity and robustness of my chosen methodology are not demonstrated through objectivity but rather in the explication of subjectivity (Rashotte & Jensen, 2007). Therefore, I reconciled my roles as a White person and a White researcher by committing to an ongoing process of reflexivity, bolstering my epistemological fidelity (Hertz, 1997).

As part of this reflexive process, I kept a research journal (Appendix M) to reflect on how my presuppositions may impact the research. For example, I had a preconceived notion that contributors may find Whiteness uncomfortable to discuss, so I considered sending them a copy of the interview protocol before the interviews so that they could become familiar with it. After reflecting on this decision in my journal, I realised that this was probably an imposition of my anxiety onto the methodology. Instead, I decided to offer some time post-interview to discuss any issues and provided links to some follow-up readings on Whiteness in the debrief letter (Appendix L). Journaling also illuminated some unconscious insights into the analytical process. For example, I recorded a frightening dream that I had about White supremacists that may have informed the sense of trepidation that I picked up on from the contributors' accounts. I implemented further reflexive practices during analysis such as considering my responses to 'racial' and cultural positionality questions posed by Milner IV (2007) and ethical questions posed by Rashotte and Jensen (2007) which both emphasise the importance of attending to context to ensure validity in hermeneutic phenomenological research. This attention includes considering how the broader community (both societal and professional), the research literature and systemic and organisational barriers and structures may shape contributors' experiences of 'race' and culture in addition to informing my research decisions, emphasis, and interpretation.

Supervision was also an intrinsic part of my reflexive process. During the theme explicating process, I had a meeting with my secondary supervisor who challenged one of my early initial theme labels 'wounded by Whiteness' because it appeared to them that I was positioning some of my contributors as victims of Whiteness which was not congruent with their own self-proclaimed White privilege. This observation alerted me to the importance of adequately portraying the nuance in what I had perceived i.e. although Whiteness can be harmful to White people, it does so within a juxtaposition of privilege that makes it essentially distinct from the harm experienced by REM people. As a result, I amended the label to 'a place to hide' which was more essentially accurate whilst retaining the loss of authenticity that appears to occur when hiding within Whiteness. Following this discussion, I decided to implement a reflexive log (Appendix N) so I could make shorter and more immediate reflexive notes during the analytical process. This helped me to keep the reflexive process 'live' rather than

retrospective which helped to maintain a more engaged and active awareness of the impact of my subjectivity on the analysis.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

The current study adheres to the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2021) and the University of East London's (UEL) Code of Practice for Research Ethics (2015). Although experienced psychologists are not considered a vulnerable group, it was still important to implement strategies to avoid creating unnecessary distress. Part of my lifeworld is an in-depth knowledge of the literature on race, including the inherent ethical dilemmas. For example, Utsey et al. (2005a) described how participants in their study exhibited 'unmanageable' anxiety levels when discussing issues relating to 'race', and the research design was criticised for being deliberately provocative (Wade, 2005). van Manen (2016) emphasised the act of research as an act of care, and this attitude was adhered to at all stages of the research process. To create a space where contributors felt able to talk openly, I emphasised the co-constructive nature of the research endeavour and treated the contributors as collaborators and sources of knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Within the presentation of the analysis, care was also taken to present the contributors' stories with enough context to retain the original meaning rather than simply extracting excerpts to illustrate themes in a reductive way.

Within a HPA methodological approach, there is scope to include contributors in the analytical process as 'co-researchers' a label that emphasises an active process of giving feedback on research findings, which some phenomenological researchers view as adding to validity. The current study did not enrol the contributors in this way as such an approach is arguably more relevant to descriptive rather than phenomenological approaches where contributors' validation of the findings is more straightforward (Willig & Billin, 2011). Langdrige (2007) argues that because an interpretative approach to phenomenology takes the analysis beyond a contributor's original description, they may not recognise the researcher's interpretation as relevant to their experience. The contributors may also be faced with potential meaning from their experience that they are not prepared or willing to engage with which raises ethical concerns. For example, this could occur with interpretations about how a contributor may have invested in systems of Whiteness.

The current study was approved by UEL's Research Ethics Committee (Appendix A). Information about the nature of the study was included in the recruitment materials, and contributors' informed consent was obtained before conducting the interviews. Contributors were notified that they could withdraw their data up to 3 weeks after the interviews (the point of data aggregation). As some aspects of Whiteness are sensitive in nature and potentially difficult to talk about e.g., racism, confidentiality was particularly important to ensure that the contributors could share their experience free from the concern that they could be identified by their data. Therefore, a data management plan approved by UEL's data management team was implemented. Once data collection was complete, the corresponding audio files were transcribed verbatim and deleted from the recording device. All data was anonymised at the point of transcription to protect the identity of the contributors, and anyone associated with them. This included using pseudonyms and removing any identifying information from the transcripts, such as specific place names and some professional affiliations. The symbol 'XX' represents these omissions in the data. Only I, as the primary researcher, had access to the original audio files, which were encrypted and stored on UEL's secure online drives and deleted from all sources at the point of transcription.

### **3.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter reviewed the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the current study's chosen methodology. It outlined the research design, including data collection and analytical procedure. Finally, it attended to reflexivity, rigour, and ethical issues. The following chapter will present the findings of the current study.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis**

### **4.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter presents the four emergent themes that were illuminated from a process of hermeneutic phenomenological analysis, inspired by Van Manen (2016), on the accounts of the lived experience of Whiteness for a group of six White British counselling psychologists. The essence of these themes is presented with excerpts from the contributors' original accounts to provide a rich and illustrative interpretation of the personal and professional experience of Whiteness for this group of contributors.

### **4.2 A note on language**

In the ensuing analysis, I use the term 'Other' (capitalised to indicate its use as a noun) to indicate when the contributors talk about someone whom they perceive as positioned outside of Whiteness. Sometimes the use of the term 'Other' is used to represent when the contributors have themselves felt othered by Whiteness, but most often, it is used to refer to REM people in the contributors' accounts. I acknowledge that when this term is used to describe REM people, it could perpetuate Othering. However, Whiteness emerged as an essentially Othering phenomenon, and therefore, the use of the term seems appropriate when used in the specific context of this piece of research. The contributors' descriptions of their perceptions of the Other are presented as a telling of their own lived experience and do not make any assertion or claim to know the lived experience of Whiteness for REM people. It is important to note that although there are times when the subsequent analysis refers to some of the difficulties or costs that contributors have experienced in relation to the phenomenon of Whiteness, this does not imply that the experience is equivalent to the difficulties or costs that can impact REM people.

### **4.3 Introduction to the themes**

Four emergent themes emerged from the contributors' accounts which are an amalgamation of several associated primary themes (see Appendix P for examples):

- Whiteness is a bypass
- Whiteness is a vessel
- Whiteness is a trap
- Whiteness is a conditional home

The aim of the current study was to co-construct the phenomenon of Whiteness for this specific group of contributors at a specific point in time through the interpretative lens of one specific researcher. It makes no attempt to construct or convey a lived experience of Whiteness that is universal. This does not mean that the emergent themes are arbitrary, they are a carefully co-constructed representation of the contributors' lifeworlds illuminated through language. Whilst some of the primary themes that formed the emergent themes were not present for every contributor, the overall emergent themes were present in all the contributors' accounts. Therefore, the themes appear to capture something of the essence of the lived experience of Whiteness for this group of contributors.

#### **4.5 Embedding reflexivity into the analytical process**

A key part of ensuring validity and rigour during the research process is a constant commitment to epistemological, methodological, and personal reflexivity (Kasket, 2012). I came to this research with strong, critical views on Whiteness, which I had to balance with the openness of mind required of a hermeneutic phenomenological researcher. Heidegger (1927/62) stated that we must always be on guard against arbitrary and popular conceptions, be willing to be flexible, and perhaps even revise our view to accommodate what emerges in "the clearing" (p. 171). My biggest challenge was acknowledging my preconceived views of Whiteness whilst not imposing them on the data and remaining open to co-constructing Whiteness anew with my contributors. This is not to say that I was ready to abandon my critical stance on Whiteness, nor did my constructivist position require me to, but rather that I was constantly aware of it and mindful of how it impacted the analytical process. My early analysis was regularly interrupted by my propensity to try to 'figure out' Whiteness and to disentangle it enough to present it in delineated themes. I found the analytical process anxiety-provoking and sometimes overwhelming as the emerging essences of the phenomenon did not neatly 'fit' into a simplified summary due to the complexity,

contradiction and tension in the contributors' accounts. To reflect this, I decided to present the analysis in four overarching emergent themes as attempts to organise them into neat and organised subthemes were futile and would have ultimately been epistemologically incongruent with this piece of research. As such, there is inevitably some overlap between themes.

## **4.6 Emergent themes**

### **4.6.1 Emergent theme 1: Whiteness is a bypass**

When the contributors described their lived experience of Whiteness, all but one equated Whiteness with privilege, and the essence of this privilege was constructed as the ability to bypass some of life's problems and associated distress, which created a lived experience of relative ease compared to the perceived experience of the Other. This experience of ease was multi-faceted and appeared to include a relative sense of freedom, comfort, access, and choice. The comparison with the Other seemed to be crucial to this experience as, without it, the day-to-day experience of the ability to bypass emerged as largely outside of the contributors' awareness.

Several contributors described their lived experience of privilege as a kind of societal freedom. Rob shared that he had first noticed how he took this freedom for granted during a trip to an Asian country in his twenties when, due to his Whiteness, he thought that he could challenge the local police on their behaviour towards him. Instead, to his shock, he had been arrested. Following this incident, Rob realised that this experience of assumed freedom to speak and act was not universal. Like Rob, Patrick also experienced Whiteness as a sense of freedom explaining that, for him, it serves as a facilitator that entitles him to enter and easily fit into professional spaces. He reflected that when combined with his maleness, his Whiteness allows him to be heard and believed more than Others, including White women.

I can speak in ways and get away with it that other people maybe of colour...perhaps, probably can't...act in certain ways within parameters [Rob: 3712-3744]



I think about my whiteness being like I'm expected to be, to be there. If you, if you know what I mean, I, I sort of nobody questions my right to be anywhere.  
[Patrick: 5125-5127]

Both excerpts convey an experience of wider and more spacious societal parameters than those perceived to be defined for the Other. There is an implied sense of free movement and a transcending of the demarcations that are imposed on those outside of the protection of Whiteness, where to be privileged means to have permission to evade the restrictions that meet the Other.

This sense of freedom, movement and transcension appears to be prolific and multi-dimensional. Annabelle, Hannah, and Angela alluded to Whiteness as the presence of something 'underneath', a figurative channel that carries them through the world and past many of the obstacles that meet the Other. When defining Whiteness, Annabelle described how easy it is for her to obtain access and choice, even as a visitor to another country. This was particularly striking to her as she had not 'become White' until she travelled outside of the UK where she had always been viewed as a 'foreigner' because of her physical appearance and cultural background. Suddenly, in the context of the African country that she had moved to, she had an elevated status that gave her access to an experience of access and choice not granted to the local population. Hannah described being White as the privilege to be relatively carefree compared to REM people and to be able to expect a certain level of comfort, safety, and priority as she moves around the world. Angela constructed her definition of Whiteness by recalling an experience during a visit to an African country where she had been struck by how a local person had been treated when unwell compared to the treatment that she could expect if taken ill. Her description conveyed a simultaneously figurative and literal mode of transportation that brings forth a sense of speed.

...there was a hospital there, not a place you ever want to go in...but again, that privilege. I wouldn't go to that hospital. When I got gastroenteritis, we had a private doctor...and he gave me every medicine under the sun...this is their country, lived there all their life, I, I swan in and I have a completely different, um, different experience. [Annabelle: 2298-2309]

...I just couldn't believe that people had those experiences. So that's how I, you know, that's where I really saw the difference, you know? That I can move around this world safely and expect to get all of my needs met and be put first in a reasonable manner. [Hannah: 257-260]

...we were in Africa and some, some guy had to walk a hundred miles just to get to the hospital. Um, and he actually worked for a safari camp so they could have flown him up there in seconds, but he wasn't high enough up their, their ranking to warrant being flown. So, yeah. So, in that way we're incredibly lucky we'd get a hospital car if we had no transport. [Angela: 1478-1483]

There appears to be something essentially corporeal in these descriptions of the experience of ease and the ability to physically transport one's body somewhere to access what it needs, to have options around how it will be treated and to trust that it will be safe from harm. The contributors' descriptions appear to convey that when their bodies meet space, they find a channel of movement towards a resolution to their needs versus the perception of resistance that meets the body of the Other. The contributors do not seem to need to do anything to invoke this ability to bypass, rather it comes to them, following them wherever they go in the world. The sense of shock and disbelief apparent in the above descriptions seems to convey how, upon witnessing the resistance faced by the Other, the contributors realise how taken for granted their privilege is.

For Annabelle, the experience of freedom and movement within the bypass is ostensibly 'oiled' by Britishness, minimising friction, and allowing smooth movement.

And I think that's what I learned the most, that actually, it's not just about whiteness, it's about being British. Being British has this amazing, it's like a gold card where you can travel anywhere in the world. You know, even if you've qualified in this country, most of your qualifications are accepted in most parts of the world... I lived in XX...an XX passport took you nowhere, you know, like literally it, you, the, the, and again, I was this very young woman with this enormous status and privilege afforded to me because I was white and British

and I, I didn't understand that my passport was one of the most powerful bits of paper that people would die to get as well. [Annabelle: 2265-2277]

It appears that when Whiteness is combined with Britishness, the ability to bypass can effectively transcend the borders that restrict the Other. A British passport and qualifications, loaded with a sense of status and hierarchy, appear to facilitate this ability to travel the world. Annabelle spoke of the purported obliviousness of those inside the bypass versus those outside of it, conveying her anger at the ignorance and entitlement she perceives in other White British people.

It's only, it's only a privilege if, you know it's a privilege. So, most people who've got a passport in this country do not understand the privilege of having, you know, this colonial white passport, if you like, even if you are foreigner, that's why foreigners kill themselves trying to come over and get it or will take any risk to try and get it. We don't even know we've got it. [Annabelle: 2279-2284]

The contrast created by Annabelle's description of the mostly taken-for-granted autonomy, agency, and choice available to her and other White British people is striking. An extreme dichotomy emerges of absolute privilege versus basic survival. Whilst she can travel freely for leisure, the Other endures a corporeal, sometimes life-or-death struggle. Annabelle's reference to the colonial origins of her passport gives the impression that her sense of this bypass is one forged through power, force, and dominance of the Other. Almost all the contributors similarly expressed that when they do consciously reflect on their comparative privilege, they construct it as something imbalanced, exclusive, and unjust. Annabelle's description suggests that despite the significant advantages that she receives through being privileged, her perception of collective ignorance implies that she is not always aware of this privilege.

This perception of ignorance seemed to be shared by most of the contributors who also gave the impression that their awareness of their privilege is transient and only arises in scenarios where there is a stark comparison with the lack of privilege granted to the Other. Patrick remarked that outside of this comparison, his privilege means that he is usually unaware of the resistance that meets the Other. When asked specifically about his experience as a counselling psychologist, he struggled to think

of times when Whiteness had stood out to him in this context compared to his maleness and his class. During this struggle he often drew on his knowledge of gender to supplement the gap in his knowledge, possibly indicating some embarrassment or shame. Meanwhile, Rob shared his perception of ignorance in himself and other White people which gives him a sense of distrust in the ability of White people to address 'race' related issues. His description expressed a sense of futility.

...I am most of the time, not aware of that as being privilege, you know, that, that wonderful thing, you know, privilege is thinking something's not a problem, cause it's not a problem for you. [Patrick: 5127-5130]

...my ignorance is what I'm really saying about whiteness...the privilege of being ignorant and not even knowing that we're ignorant...if I offer my deepest sort of belief...I don't think, uh, around issues of colour that white people are developed enough, self-aware enough, conscious enough to be part of a real key part of a resolution, and I think that's a problem of whiteness. We don't know how white we are and what conveys and how much unconsciously, um, uh, we live happily in our privilege. [Rob: 3709-3711; 4001-4009]

Angela initially struggled to define and claim her positionality within Whiteness which seemed linked to her embarrassment towards the behaviour of other White people that she seemed keen to distinguish herself from. Angela spoke about her discomfort witnessing the disrespectful behaviour of White holidaymakers towards local people and noticing disparities in the distribution of resources when travelling to post-colonial contexts. When reflecting on this scenario, she appeared sensitive to this disparity and the protection she enjoys as a White person. However, despite stating that she is aware of her privilege on an underlying level and alluding to the structural nature of Whiteness (e.g. free speech, healthcare, protection from prejudice), she appeared to think that being too aware of one's privilege and attributing it to anything besides luck is a show of arrogance. This may suggest that her personal values about being humble or grateful for her lifestyle may be informing and restricting her reflection on the systemic nature of Whiteness.

(R: And you sound very like, aware of that privilege). Angela: Um, speaking to you. Yes. On a general level, no. On an underlying level, I am. So, I, I don't wake up in the morning, think, gosh, I'm privileged. But, um, so I guess I, as we talk about it yes but in general, no...Because otherwise I'm walking around with an 'I'm privileged' badge and that's even worse...I think to say that you're privileged in has some kind of arrogance attached to it, as opposed to, I'm privileged or I'm lucky to have what I've got. [Angela: 1779-1789]

These descriptions create an image of a figurative screen behind which, most of the time, the contributors can enjoy the privileges of Whiteness whilst not having to think, see, or be exposed to the full spectrum of human experience and suffering. This could present a considerable block for the contributors whose job is meeting people in their distress. It suggests that they have not been informed or equipped to recognise and respond to disparities in professional settings. However, within the same descriptions, there seemed to be evidence of a 'meta-awareness' as most contributors remarked on being paradoxically aware of their ignorance. Their accounts conveyed a sense of suspicion and critique towards the limitations of their awareness that implied an understanding of something deeper, collective, and systemic as opposed to a personal failing. Only one contributor spoke of their training in CoP as a facilitator to overcoming this ignorance, and none of them referred to any ongoing professional development that helped to address this.

It was noticeable that when the contributors critiqued the inequality between their ability to bypass compared to the resistance that meets the Other, they did so by expressing their discomfort, shock, and surprise but did not refer to any theoretical knowledge about the systemic nature of Whiteness. The examples they used to illustrate their experience came from personal examples that often occurred abroad in contexts where Whiteness was not the norm. None of the contributors referenced the 'racial' disparities in the UK in mental health settings or mentioned noticing them in the context of their professional roles working with clients. This may speak to the invisible nature of Whiteness or perhaps a culture of de-sensitivity to disparities in these contexts.

Although the contributors' constructions of Whiteness conveyed an experience of ease and an ability to bypass some of life's problems, in situations where difficulties and obstacles could not be fully bypassed, the contributors' accounts gave the impression that they had experienced being able to navigate this difficulty more easily. Rob returned to a comparison with the Other when he explained that he is less attuned to what Whiteness is for those who are White and more attuned to what Whiteness is for those who are not White. Referring to his earlier experience of being arrested in an Asian country, he spoke of being shackled to other prisoners, this challenge to his usual sense of free movement highlighted for him how persistent his privilege is.

...whiteness also means, uh, being able to navigate problems in different ways, which may be, depending on how you look at things, more conducive to an easier life...there's a privilege even in, even in the nasty situations. [Rob: 3747-3751]

Again, the experience of privilege always emerged in contrast with the perceived difficulty experienced by the Other; it is not experienced as a singular or isolated phenomenon. Instead, it is always constructed in-relation-to-the-other.

Annabelle, Rob, and Patrick all shared experiences of oppression and discrimination around intersecting aspects of their identities, including experiences that gave them the impression that they failed to meet the standards of Whiteness. They had each experienced disapproval or even a sense of feeling implicitly threatened by other White people as a direct result of this failure. Despite this, all three of them spoke of retaining the ability to bypass and access to an experience of relative ease compared to the Other. However, the ability to access the bypass did not appear to be conferred absolutely and seemingly was limited by intersecting aspects of their identities.

Annabelle recognised the range of privileges she presently experiences based upon being White, being middle class, having the title of 'Dr' and speaking with an RP English accent. Her current class and title are specifically attached to her role as a counselling psychologist, yet during her training to reach this position, she experienced judgement in response to not presenting as 'White enough'.

My partner calls me 'not quite white'. Yeah? Because he's clearly white... I'm much darker, so he's white...I'm not, not quite white, so that is what I experienced...one of the biggest, one of the most insulting things, well, my doctoral training, one of the teachers, so I was a therapist, I worked as therapist when I did my doctoral training...They thought I was some Reiki spiritual person, which I'm not, you know, yes, I, I have a spirituality, but again, that the, the racism or the judgment was that, you know, "She's all like this, so she can't be..." as a personality, I look a bit messy but actually who I am as a, a person and how I work and as a student is all really very functional and organised and, you know, exact, I've never, never even missed a deadline in 12 years of study, you know?...they had this impression that, oh, I'm, I'm too flimsy to, to, to already, you know, be in the field or even to have that. I don't even know if they thought I should be there as, uh, uh, as well...I was too foreign, so I needed to calm that down, or you're too chatty, you're too...you notice they say "too", "too much", "too much", "too much", or "not enough", "too much", "not enough", "too much", "enough". So that's the whole, um, the whole message going through. I found a lot of, um, it wasn't just about, you know, the, the whiteness, it's about the attitude of white privilege that, that I came across time and time again...[Annabelle: 2786-2814]

In her description, Annabelle seems to have been reprimanded for being her authentic self and not conforming to Whiteness or more specifically, to the stereotype of a White counselling psychologist.

For Patrick and Rob, the ability to bypass seemed to be predicated on their ability to hide or mask the oppressed aspects of their identities within Whiteness. Patrick explicated the contrast between his lived experience of his sexuality versus his lived experience of Whiteness, remarking that in his day-to-day experience as a counselling psychologist, he is much more aware of his 'gayness' than he is of his Whiteness.

I remember when I very first started training, uh, as a counselling psychologist and my first placement, my very first client was a woman who was going through divorce with her husband, who she suspected was gay. And I was like, I was anxious that she thought that I was gay, you know, and that I had to try and

hide that from her or, or mask it as much as possible...that kind of surveillance orientation that comes from years of covering it up or worrying about whether it's safe to say or not...Whereas I suppose maybe the same thing is true of whiteness that, that, you know, it's not something I can cover. Um, but it's something that I can maybe feel is...I can feel more or less comfortable to assert or be...[Patrick: 4931-4952]

It seems that when Patrick has experienced anxiety and anguish around how his identity as a gay man will be received, he could mask this part of himself with Whiteness if he suspected that it was not safe to show. Within the same description seems to sit a source of comfort and persecution, therefore Whiteness, here, is experienced as paradoxical, unstable, and conditional. The ostensive protection of Whiteness is only available to Patrick so long as he does not expose the part of him that does not fit within the norms of Whiteness. An ultimatum emerges where to reveal his difference is to choose difficulty and to relinquish the ease that comes with the ability to bypass.

Rob appeared to experience Whiteness when coming up against institutions that demarcated difference and sameness along 'racialised lines', this demarcation is not neutral as there is a preferred status to belonging rather than being Othered. Whiteness appeared to facilitate his navigation within his doctoral training and finding his first job as a counselling psychologist through his ability to mask aspects of himself that he did not feel safe to share. Due to his personal experience with addiction and mental health problems, Rob appeared to be conscious of his difference, and his sense of being the Other was ever-present. Like Patrick, there appeared to be a sense of surveillance orientation. Rob reflected on how being able to outwardly meet the norms of Whiteness allowed him to get through the CoP training process and past the critical White gaze of the faculty and into the profession in a way that someone without this ability would not be able to.

I was in a very, very difficult situation at the university and, um, had I been not able to pass as all these things that tick the boxes of the norms, um, I would've been in a much more difficult situation...I was able to hide, if you like, cover, mask, not present openly parts of myself that I didn't want to, or my history.



Someone of colour couldn't, uh, and that really struck me but even in a very difficult situation, I still had a benefit because I could choose...my differences weren't visible to the eye and I was able to use that, had people known of my differences, and when I first started working in the NHS, they'd never have taken me on...there was a way around it, I could choose what and how, If anything, I disclosed...And when I ended up in trouble, I could choose difficulty, because I'd spoken out about some issues. Um, uh, only then did they start to get a sense that there might be something that wasn't physical to them...if I'd been black, it would've been...easier to actually say "this is racism" than whatever it was that went on....I did share in my training group, my story. This, this is, this is the bias, this is the whiteness, um, I shared it in the training group and somebody turned around and said, "Oh, I'm glad you told us after we got to know you because if you told me that at the beginning, it would've been..." and I'll bet if I had not been white, it would've been harder to cover, and if I'd not been white, they would've had a stronger reaction. [Rob: 3906-3950; 4152-4157]

Upon considering how much this privilege had facilitated his journey, Rob became tearful as he realised his relief at evading something insidious.

I haven't really thought too, so much about the privilege that I've had until we're talking now... it constantly sort of dawns more and more on me, actually how much privilege I've had...I always felt kind of really hard done by, a bit of, something of a victim and I'm sort of sitting there thinking actually that doesn't fit. I've had a lot more privilege than I've realised. And then it makes me sort of in the background think, what the heck would it have been like if I hadn't been white or male, or straight... [Rob: 3927-3942]

Rob's statement 'this is racism' suggests that what he evaded was Whiteness. Despite their experiences of oppression, in these descriptions, both Patrick and Rob appear to experience Whiteness as the dominant and mediating factor in how they are perceived in the world. They described being aware of their Otherness whilst being perceived in sameness that still afforded them a relative sense of ease. However, there is a sense

that to retain their ability to bypass, they must mould themselves to the norms of Whiteness, that is, to keep hidden any difference. They both appear to traverse a sameness-difference continuum that is constructed along 'racial' lines that appear narrow and precarious. To take one foot wrong is to expose oneself. The privilege that Whiteness affords them appears to come at a price, and this price appears to be the right to be their authentic selves. Annabelle, Rob, and Patrick's experiences of persecution towards intersectional aspects of their identities within CoP settings despite their privilege and option of conforming to Whiteness presents a troubling picture of how the phenomenon can operate within the institutional/organisational space, particularly for individuals who cannot hide their difference and protect themselves in this way.

The theme 'Whiteness is a bypass' has captured an experience of privilege that allows the contributors to bypass the resistance that meets the Other and ensures a sense of relative freedom, choice, comfort, and ease. This privilege is ubiquitous yet transient in how it presents to awareness. Only once this freedom had been challenged or when contributors noticed the resistance faced by the Other did their ability to bypass become obvious to them. In these moments of awareness, which occurred in their personal lives rather than in their clinical practice, most of the contributors responded with discomfort, shock, and surprise at the disparity, suggesting a lack of knowledge about the systemic workings of Whiteness. It appeared that the contributors' perceptions of themselves as ignorant of their privilege most of the time speak to the invisible and unremarkable nature of Whiteness that could keep them from noticing and therefore challenging Whiteness in their professional practice. The ability to bypass appeared to provide a way for some contributors to navigate potential oppression targeted at Othered aspects of their identities that failed to meet White norms but only if they were willing to mask their authentic selves by conforming to Whiteness.

The following theme portrays Whiteness as an empty vessel that becomes imbued with meaning upon meeting the perceived difference of the Other, it continues to explicate the experience of privilege touched upon in the current theme and goes on to explore how an awareness of difference changes the meaning of Whiteness for contributors.

#### 4.6.2 Emergent theme 2: Whiteness is a vessel

Whiteness emerged from the contributors' accounts as an empty vessel that only becomes imbued with meaning when it meets the difference of the Other. As Patrick remarked, "It's unremarkable in the context of white spaces". The Other in this context appears to be anyone whom the contributors perceive as 'racially' different from themselves. The resulting contrast that this difference creates makes it possible for the contributors to 'notice' their Whiteness and reflect on it in a way that is not possible when the contributors are alone or in an 'all White' environment. Without this contrast, Whiteness emerges as an essentially meaningless void.

... my whiteness becomes a salient feature by its difference, but in the context of an all-white kind of thing, it becomes something that you just don't think about. Um, so I suppose it's, I'm not aware of my whiteness until there is something that's not white in a way....I don't know how to, um, demonstrate whiteness. I don't know really. It's a, and it's so, so curious that such a, a significant part of my identity and one which I know gives me a greater deal of privilege is not something that I can pin down to anything...I could talk about my whiteness by, with reference to all the other things that whiteness gives me, right, but it, but in its essence, it, it is sort of feels opaque or difficult. [Patrick: 4822-4826; 5347-5361]

...in order to notice something, you've got to compare it to something else. So, if you're in a community of all white people, you won't be comparing it to someone else. Um, so it's got to be somewhere where I've noticed that I'm different to that person or that person is different to me by skin colour. And I don't think it was anything before...[Tasmin: 1327-1331]

...I think those, those have particular times when I noticed my whiteness compared to... yeah, in my case, it was, it was with blackness. [Hannah: 112-114]

The above excerpts all seem to portray an experience of Whiteness that is not pre-reflective or primordial, it does not appear to bring forth any essential knowledge, and

it only seems to emerge within contexts where the contributors perceive a difference between the self and the Other. It appears that Whiteness is often non-distinct and somewhat irrelevant to the contributors' daily lived experience. Considering that these accounts come from experienced counselling psychologists who have completed doctoral training and are required to engage in ongoing professional development, this experience may illuminate how Whiteness is viewed in the broader context of CoP. This is not to suggest that Whiteness is meaningless, rather the meaning appears to change based on whatever aspect of Whiteness is being brought into the contributors' awareness through a contrast with the Other. The two aspects that appeared in the contributors' accounts were a) the perception of physical difference, and b) a disparity in privilege.

When reflecting on times that they had perceived a contrast based on physical difference, some contributors spoke about experiences in their youth when they appeared to view the body of the Other in a way that separates and alienates it from their own, becoming a source of intrigue and fascination. When describing when she first noticed that she was White, Hannah spoke about making physical comparisons with her classmates at school and being fascinated with the difference in hair and physique. She went on to describe an experience later in her twenties with a Black colleague which had led to the realisation that White and Black bodies are not so different, and how the weight of this realisation was like being "hit in the face by a door".

...noticing those, those contrasts...it was redness on my hands that was bothering me, and I remember saying to her like, "How would you know if you had poor circulation by looking at yourself?" And she just turned her hands over, and of course they're white, you know? And, um, that was, that was like a really sort of stark moment of we're not so different, you know? [Hannah: 99-110]

Similarly, Angela, when asked to reflect on a situation where she had been especially aware of Whiteness, described coming into a diverse part of London for the first time as a teenager after spending most of her life in predominantly White areas and how remarkable it was to be suddenly surrounded by Black and Brown people.

So, when I got on the bus, 99% of the people were white and when I got to XX 99%, well, were different, brown skin, probably black skin. I just thought wow, I've travelled to somewhere completely different in the world, this is really amazing...I just thought, well, this is really strange. A bus ride can get you from England to Africa in 20 minutes. [Angela: 1971-1978]

Hannah and Angela's descriptions of their earlier life experiences gave the impression that they were observing the body of the Other as distinct and removed from their own, as illustrated by Hannah's sense of surprise when she discovers a similarity between them. In Angela's account, she appeared to Other everyone else on the bus by viewing them as a homogenous 'racial' group, seeing them only for their physical difference in colour to her at that moment. It seemed taken for granted that the main difference between her and the rest of the passengers was a 'racial' one, despite the possibility that the passengers had no connection with Africa and could have more in common with Angela than with each other.

Both Hannah and Angela seemed to view difference as if it was 'real' and located in the body, and in Angela's case, these bodies were tied to specific regions in the world (English = White, African = Black). The accounts convey a sense of naivety that suggests an obliviousness to the process of racialisation at play in the creation of difference. The view and experience of the Other emerged as limited, constructed arbitrarily within a racialised paradigm and more specifically through a lens of Whiteness. The Other, rather than the self, are positioned as the source of difference. This may indicate the contributors' exposure as young people to societal norms and discourses of Whiteness against which everyone else is compared. Although it is not clear how the contributors view physical difference now that they are older and trained as counselling psychologists, their accounts suggest that if such norms are not challenged in education and training, clients could be objectified and alienated through arbitrarily ascribed meaning associated with 'racially' framed difference.

Half of the contributors spoke of times when they were in contexts where Whiteness was not the norm, and they temporarily became the Other based on their physical difference. The experience of being alienated and becoming an object of fascination appeared to feel novel, at times amusing and at other times strange and annoying.

...sometimes it's being like...(sighs) you're odd, so we want to see what you're like... one of my children was really blonde and, and uh, um, blue eyed and the XX used to think it fascinating and come and touch his hair for good luck. Um, and I guess that it could be a bit annoying at times (laughs), but also understanding that...We were very accepted in in, in the community...but clearly there was a difference [Tasmin: 817-825]

I was the only white person in the village. Um, and I can see myself and sort of, at first it was sort of interesting that people looking a lot noticing, uh, and like curious and I quite liked it...and then it became annoying...because it was like nonstop...staring, looking. Um, and in the end it just really pissed me off. And I couldn't wait to find the quickest way out or like, avoid people or hide behind a tree or something...I was just so sick of it, but it made me think about...what it must be like, um, to be other than the norm, other than whiteness. [Rob: 3339-3351]

...it was literally like a herd of elephants walking down XX high street. People were...literally...slack jawed in amazement...Every two or three minutes, we were stopped for a selfie by people...like, it was the most exotic thing. It was like somebody from Papaya New Guinea arriving with full feathered headdress and walking down the aisles of, of Tesco...I mean, it was just our whiteness... It was just very, it was funny. [Patrick: 5160-5184]

Patrick went on to speak about an occasion when he stood out for his Whiteness in a way that had triggered old discourses from his childhood in a colonised African country that left him feeling frightened:

...I've been aware of my whiteness in kind of feeling a bit frightened at different times where I've again, been the only white person there...And I felt very, like, not part of that group...it very much activated a lot of my kind of childhood stuff, about large groups of black people. Um, it was, I was not threatened, nobody was threatening, but it was like, this is not, these are not my people and this is not my place...They didn't see me go back into my room. Um, because I was

ashamed of like, not wanting to be there...that was less humorous kind of put a more sense of like, wow, no, I can't be here. (R: Mm-hmm) Because I don't fit in and I don't feel comfortable. [Patrick: 5193-5221]

It seems that it is unusual for the contributors to have Whiteness brought into their awareness, especially in such a direct way. Being observed seems to make their usually imperceptible physical Whiteness visible to them as illustrated in Rob's statement "I can see myself". This seeing and being seen for their Whiteness seemed to disturb the otherwise essentially empty state by abruptly filling it with meaning and bringing it into their awareness. The contributors' expressions of annoyance and Patrick's description of feeling frightened convey how it feels for them to experience a position of Otherness, perhaps temporarily becoming a 'something' and not a 'someone'. Although seemingly striking in the moment, only Rob described this experience as having a lasting impact on how he views those positioned as Other. This may speak to how resilient Whiteness is as an absent norm that seeks to be forgotten.

In contrast, when Whiteness is brought into awareness by a perceived disparity in privilege between the self and the Other, all the contributors seemed to experience strong and uncomfortable emotional reactions. This included feelings of embarrassment, shame, guilt, shock, and horror. The contributors' accounts gave the impression that this emotional discomfort is something that they must attempt to reconcile. None of the contributors appeared to have a neutral or a positive response or showed any inclination to notice it without responding, indeed they seemed to feel compelled to act. These attempts of reconciliation seemed symbolic of the contributors' attempts to empty the vessel of Whiteness of the meaning and the associated discomfort that it had become imbued with. This ranged from trying to minimise the perceived difference between the self and the Other, emphasising individuality, trying to compensate the Other, utilising one's privilege to advocate for the Other, or outright rejecting the notion of a 'racially' conferred privilege.

For example, when asked about when she had first noticed Whiteness more broadly, Hannah shared that it had not been until she went to university. In her words, although she had always been against racism and had grown up in a family who integrated well

with Others despite some 'shadows of prejudice', she felt that coming from a working-class background meant that she had not previously been exposed to interrogating things from a socio-political or ideological angle. Upon realising that her colour-blindness had shut down any opportunity to engage with difference on a larger scale, she described her experience of learning about 'racial' disparities for the first time as shocking and devastating. Hearing stories of the difficult and sometimes fatal experiences of the Other at the mercy of Whiteness, versus her contrasting experience of Whiteness as something that is largely imperceptible to her, appeared to create an emotional experience of shame and guilt that she seemed compelled to address by acting to show her remorse and solidarity towards the Other.

...I felt very ashamed of my whiteness, um, of my privilege. I felt guilty. I started to positively discriminate, I think. Sometimes I think I have to be careful to do that, not to do that today. So, um, I will just walk past other white people in the street that I don't know particularly, you know, but make a, make a a point of, you know, smiling, saying hello, you know, contacting people of colour more so, things like that...It was obvious why I was doing that, because I, I, I, had this, this notion that black people weren't as accepted in my society and didn't feel as comfortable and as, um, able to take up space, have resources, you know, feel safe, that bothered me, that bothered me deeply, and I wanted to work extremely hard to change that, you know? And, but I was obviously using, I don't know, arguably unhelpful methods to do that, and you then have to wonder, was that for me? Was that for them? You know, like who, who was that to appease? You know? What would the benefits of that actually have been? "Oh wow, a white person's smiled at me!" And then I would have incidences where I'd be rejected, um, by, uh, people of colour and, um, not responded to, and I remember just thinking - I wouldn't like white people either if I was, you know? And, um, yeah, sort of coming to, to recognise that that smiley white people aren't going sort this out. You know, it's not the solution. [Hannah: 173-191]

In this description, Hannah appears to be relating to the Other through a 'racial' paradigm, taking it as given that because people are not White, they must be presently experiencing a 'racial' struggle. She appears to seek a connection with the Other to



convey her remorse and solidarity but cannot find a way to do this that matches her depth of feeling, and therefore, her efforts feel superficial to her. Hannah's description of her discomfort seems twofold - the shame and guilt she expresses towards her Whiteness appear to be compounded by the shame that she feels towards her efforts to resolve her discomfort. She mocks herself, but there is a sense of agitation beneath the jovialness. Whiteness emerges as a state of agitation; it was meaningless before she came to construct it as something concrete and imposed, and now it appears to interrupt her Being, and she cannot tolerate the ambivalence that this seems to create for her. Her statement that she would not 'like White people either' appears to position herself and other White people as inherently problematic.

Like Hannah, Angela also seemed compelled to dispel the emotional discomfort that she experienced when faced with a disparity in privilege. She described an occasion where she had experienced a contrast between her privileged position in comparison to a Black hotel worker when visiting an African country. Angela had spoken of her fondness for this country and the enrichment she experiences from her return visits there, as this is where she had been born and spent the first few years of her life. When asked to describe what it is like to return as a White visitor, she stated that it depends on how one behaves.

...when you go to a Safari camp, there are people who...clean your room for you. And sometimes it feels worse than if I went to a hotel in England and stayed and the chambermaid came and cleaned the room...So, you just, you just chat to them and you're just polite and you have a bit of a giggle and then it's okay. So, I always find that what their names are, for example, and we chat and I speak as much XX as I can. (R: What do you think...that's important for you to communicate...in those sorts of exchanges?) Angela: Respect, I think...just because one's got white skin and one, one of us has got black skin, we're the same we're people who would like, respect and warmth and kindness. [Angela: 1677-1691]

Angela's description gives the impression that she felt discomfort about the disparity in status between herself and the hotel worker and her reference to it feeling worse than if it were in England implies a concern about the colonial legacy at play. Angela

appeared to try to deconstruct the hierarchical nature of their relationship and possibly to compensate for the behaviour of other White British people by attempting to meet the hotel worker in her personness and not just her job role. Angela's description of them both being the same appears to portray an attempt to relieve her discomfort by diminishing the difference between them. She seems to need the hotel worker to engage with her in this effort. If they receive the respect that Angela is trying to convey e.g., by giggling along, then the emotional discomfort becomes manageable. Although she wants to show the hotel worker warmth, kindness, and respect, she also needs her cooperation to feel better about the disparity between them.

Both Hannah and Angela's desire to communicate their contrition and concern to the Other seems genuine, but their actions seem, at least partly, in service of their own apparent need to return Whiteness to a meaningless and comfortable void consistent with the descriptions at the start of this theme. None of the contributors gave examples of if or how this propensity to empty Whiteness arose in their professional practice, but their personal experience suggests how unprepared they have been to tolerate the tension that occurs when Whiteness enters awareness.

The theme 'Whiteness is a vessel' demonstrated that for this group of contributors, the concept of Whiteness is essentially empty until it is filled with meaning upon meeting the perceived difference of the Other. Only once Whiteness holds meaning can it be seen. The nature of this meaning appears predicated upon which aspect of difference imbues the vessel. Physical differences are viewed through a lens of fascination that creates a sense of objectification and alienation between self and Other. Whether the contributors were the ones viewing the Other through this objectifying lens or if they were the ones being viewed in this way depended on the contexts that they were in. When on the receiving end, this experience seemed striking, but its impact was fleeting, and its effect was limited. When it was a disparity in privilege that brought Whiteness into awareness, the associated meaning seemed to agitate something within the contributors, which caused emotional discomfort that they seemed compelled to resolve. Whiteness was expelled from awareness and reinstated to a meaningless void upon resolving this agitation, indicating its resilience and resistance to disturbance.

The themes presented so far have portrayed Whiteness as both a bypass and a void. The next theme introduces a dimension of Whiteness that contrasts with the aspects of experience portrayed so far by demonstrating a dimension of Whiteness that is experienced as a trap characterised by preoccupation and overthinking that results in inhibition and immobilisation.

#### **4.6.3 Emergent theme 3: Whiteness is a trap**

An experience of entrapment appeared in the contributors' descriptions of Whiteness that emerged in contrast to the apparent freedom that other aspects of Whiteness afford them as discussed in the theme 'Whiteness is a bypass' where several of the contributors spoke of the absence of thought and awareness that accompanies their usual experience of Whiteness. However, the current theme illustrates that when thought on Whiteness is necessary, it goes to the other extreme and emerges as preoccupation and over-thinking. When Whiteness mediates the contributors' experience, they seemed hyper-aware of how the self is being perceived, and this seemed to create a tentativeness around how the self is revealed.

Some contributors described diluting their self-expression when reflecting on their positionality to Whiteness. Tasmin revealed a sense of trepidation and gave the impression that she utilised self-dilution as a precaution against an ambiguous sense of attack.

I think whiteness is actually being, um, attacked at times...we have to be so careful about what is said. So, it actually stops one being one's self...you're not defining a person, you're defining a concept...if you're going to have something that is, um, only in two dimension there are two aspects and you're setting up a right and wrong, you're not using the middle bits, the grey areas...race and, um, ethnicity, they're all social constructs in order for us to categorise ourselves...we were all big one, big family. [Tasmin: 1287-1314]

The essence of Whiteness emerges as cautious and on guard in response to being positioned as 'wrong'. Perhaps to stop the construct of Whiteness from being imposed

onto her sense of individuality, Tasmin must reject the concept of 'race' altogether. Although 'race' is a social construct, and the 'right and wrong' dichotomy that accompanies it does seem to create an inhibited mode of relating (an experience shared by other contributors), what appears to be missing from Tasmin's account is an acknowledgement of the oppression experienced by REM people who cannot as easily reject the construct or its impact. It appears that acknowledging Whiteness rather than Whiteness itself is what creates a divide between people for Tasmin.

Angela also conveyed concern about how she presents herself from a position of Whiteness and seemed hyper-aware of how people could read into and take issue with something she says. This was evident when she described the difficulty she had responding to my request to think about an object that spoke to her experience of Whiteness. Her attempt to find something representative of her experience that is not offensive conveyed a perception of potential pitfalls at every turn until the self in relation to Whiteness became unutterable and, like Tasmin, only a diluted version was presented. The object that Angela initially chose was 'factor 50 sunscreen', but upon further exploration, she disclosed that this was a 'safe' answer.

...it was to avoid getting, saying anything controversial...in case...an answer, could be seen... Oh, I was having this discussion. I had, um, lunch with my team of, of counsellors that I worked with and, um, one said green wellies and then everyone said well that's more about class. And then someone said, well that's inferring other people with black skins don't have green wellies. And then it became like, Oh God, this is too difficult, and someone said, "Just say factor 50" and I thought okay, do that. (R: Mm-hmm). So, it seemed an easy thing because you, you, um... so much be read into what's you think is an, um, what's the word...an uncontroversial answer and other people might read something into it that you had no idea was there (R: Mm-hmm, and is there, is there a concern even in as you went, as you answer these interview questions here, that you might say something controversial? Is that a concern at all?) Angela: Um, um, I've thought about that too and I thought, I hope not because there's, um, because I don't feel a difference in any way. So, I don't feel it. So, I haven't really come across as something I said, but if it did, that would be quite

uncomfortable. (R: Mm-hmm, mmhmm. Would you say a bit more about that? Why would it be uncomfortable?) Angela: I guess I thought, well one of the things I thought was just having a, um, my mother had a painting, small painting of my house made for me...because it's so important, I just love it...but if I show that, that's going to be what, look what I've got that somebody else hasn't got...[Angela: 1726-1752]

There is demonstrable abstract thinking and hypothesising in Angela's account and a sense of vigilance towards how she could be received and responded to in the context of her Whiteness and, more specifically, her privilege. There appears to be no concrete way for Angela to describe her experience of Whiteness in a way that does not feel tantamount to her parading her privilege. Although she understands Whiteness generally to mean privilege, there is still a sense of ambiguity as it appears nebulous and difficult to grasp, which she paradoxically responds to by stating that she does not see or feel difference. Like Tasmin, there is a lack of acknowledgement about the processes of racialisation that create 'racial' differences. Because what she says is open to interpretation, this ambiguity seems to create anticipation about how her words could be misconstrued and betray something about her that she does not realise is there. This seems to cultivate a sense of anxiety that was exacerbated by her colleagues, causing her, like Tasmin, to be on guard against an ambiguous threat of attack. There is a sense of her trying to evade being ensnared by the trap of Whiteness, yet it seems that it is her preoccupation that leaves no space for her to authentically express herself.

Patrick also conveyed concern about how he could be perceived and engaged in a similar process of pre-empting how he might reveal something about himself that he is unaware of. He expressed concern about how he could be perceived and responded to when speaking about Whiteness, both in the context of the interview and more broadly.

...this interview is making me aware of my whiteness or, or asking me to invite me, to reflect on it and be much more of aware of it in a way that I might, 99% of the time, not even think about. (R: Mm-hmm) It's kind of curious. It's a little bit, um, awkward, I feel a little bit, um, de-skilled...I sort of feel like I'm being

given a, a task. I'm not quite sure if I'm going to be any good at...thinking about being made aware of my whiteness, the first thing that came to mind when you said that was it, my racism being pointed out (R: Mm-hmm) So, then my, my, my mind went straight to shame. So, it's like you, white people are just not aware of how offensive that is or something, you know, that kind of point being made. Like you don't, you are speaking from your, from a position of your whiteness and you're completely unaware of that. And it's like, it's not okay. And then, you think oh God!...versus someone pointing out my whiteness in a, I was about to say someone pointing out my whiteness in a positive way, and then thinking...I don't know how that could ever happen. It's like, how would my whiteness ever be pointed out in a positive way, except by some kind of white supremacist?...but where is positive whiteness? (R: Mm, mm-hmm) and I suppose positive whiteness might be in dismantling one's own privilege...But it doesn't seem to be anything about the celebration of whiteness that for me, feels anything different from flying a St George's flying out the window when England are playing rugby or, or football or something. (R: Mm-hmm) which just, just feels hideous to me. [Patrick: 5301-5329]

In addition to the shame that Patrick expresses, there is a sense of rising anxiety as he abstractly considers how he could be received and responded to in his position of Whiteness and the assumptions about him that could come with it, especially by the Other. Like Angela, there is a sense of crescendo where the pre-empting reaches a point of intolerance, and they both seem to disengage from the process with an exclamation of "Oh God!". Patrick's quandary about 'positive Whiteness' suggests that he is in a bind, uncomfortably positioned within a risky and ambiguous interpretation of Whiteness and unable to find a more positive interpretation.

The above excerpts all seem to convey a defensiveness around the topic of 'race' that inhibits some contributors from being able to relate or express themselves authentically. This suggests limited opportunities to explore or reflect on themselves as racialised beings outside of the context of the interview. The resulting preoccupation and self-dilution appear to entrap and restrict them, which could significantly interrupt their relationally based practice as counselling psychologists with REM clients.

For most contributors, Whiteness seemed to be constructed as a universal given with right and wrong ways to behave. All the contributors appeared to have an ambiguous sense of Whiteness regardless of how they constructed it, which seemed to give it a sense of potential danger. For some contributors, Whiteness seemed to be experienced as dangerous, invading, and residing within the self. Anxiety, distrust, and fear seemed to pervade relationships as the contributors could not be confident that they would not do harm or cause offence to the Other or that they would even be aware that they were. This ability to harm was constructed as not only possible but inevitable, as illustrated by Hannah's response to being asked about when she had first noticed Whiteness more broadly.

It's kind of a narrative now in my head...before I was, just as I was in my sort of relationships with my friends of colour, I remember like one friend being around my house and feeling all of a sudden very uncomfortable beside her, you know, like on the sofa watching telly together and that, that was not how I felt before. And, um, just scared that I was going to do something inadvertently racist...so it got in the way of my intimacy with people actually, because then suddenly there's this, this fear of offense, you know, that I'm part of the problem...That was upsetting because, um, that, um, that intimacy is something that I really value in my relationships... I've never spoken to any of my black friends about their relationship with racial prejudice, it's never come up in our conversations. I don't, I couldn't say why. I don't, I don't, I wouldn't say I avoid it, but it doesn't. Maybe quite simply, why would a black person talk to a white person about experience of racial prejudice?... now I wouldn't be uncomfortable having those conversations, but, um, back then I think I would of, I would've been frightened, really frightened, that I would, um, yeah, offend people in some way with this sort of newfound awareness of all my privilege. So, yeah, a lot of overcompensating in strange ways. [Hannah: 199-224]

Hannah appeared to experience a sense of distrust towards Whiteness, which extends to herself and the Other, as she could not be sure how they would perceive her actions. In this excerpt, the fear of causing harm or offence seems to threaten the security of the entire relationship, and everything feels at risk. There is tension between Hannah's statement that she would no longer feel uncomfortable having conversations about

'race' and her disclosure that she has never spoken to any of her REM friends about their experience of 'racial' prejudice. The ongoing risk seems to make it difficult to manoeuvre herself interpersonally. The space in which she is free to Be and relate seems tight and restricted. Much of the space seemed to have been filled with her overthinking and pre-empting of the Other's experience. Hannah seemed to construct Whiteness as a tangible thing dividing her from her friend. It seemed taken for granted that her relationships would operate within a racialised paradigm. Paradoxically, she seems to be reinforcing the very concept of 'race' that she is trying to transcend. Her distrust seems to create a disconnection whereby she cannot be herself *and* White, causing her to lose touch with her humanity and, in turn, the humanity of the Other. This conundrum seems to have prevented her from being in relation fully and authentically, seemingly at the cost of her sense of intimacy.

Like Hannah, Patrick seemed to experience a sense of distrust that occurred within a set paradigm of racialisation. When discussing what it is like to be White, he stated:

...in therapeutic work or in any, any kind of interaction with somebody who is not white, that I'm sensitive to that difference and to, to what kind of, what might come up in terms of getting things wrong...most of my practice is with trans people, and I know that the, that's like the most common thing that people say when they think about, you know, okay, I'm going to work with a trans person and I just don't want to use the wrong pronouns, or I don't want to get, I don't want to offend them, you know, I kind of feel that, that sensitivity (R: Mmhmm) Um, and I would feel it particularly with somebody from a black XX, from that, because I'm then foregrounded, my, my kind of like colonialist self is sort of there and, and kind of potentially, well it's shameful as well as potentially damaging, you know, all sort of hurtful [Patrick: 4829-4840]

Like Hannah, Patrick appears to relate to the Other through a racialised paradigm reinforcing a perceived 'racial' divide and depriving himself and the Other of the ability to relate whole person to whole person. In his hypothesising, Patrick appeared to be navigating a fixed and narrow template of right and wrong ways to behave as a White person, but there is a sense of uncertainty as to what these right and wrong ways are. The risk of him harming the Other and himself seems ever-present. Both Hannah and



Patrick seem to be operating from a vigilant and defensive position that limits their ability to relate fully and authentically in their personal and professional relationships.

Whilst Hannah and Patrick appeared to over-identify with Whiteness in their descriptions to the point of preoccupation with a sense of risk within the construct, in contrast, Tasmin appeared resistant to identifying with the label of Whiteness at all. She often referenced other components of her identity that she finds more significant, such as her gender and the spectrum of identities between people who would be considered White out of her stated concern for rigid and dichotomous views of humanity that divide people from one another. For Tasmin, who grew up with well-travelled parents who placed an emphasis on openness, tolerance, and respect for other cultures and who had enjoyed living and working in numerous diverse cultural contexts due to her husband's service in the military, acknowledging Whiteness appeared to undermine her personal and familial values.

I still (sighs) don't get the whiteness. I'm, I'm struggling a little bit with it because I know I'm white, but I, I, I don't, I, I know how the... I just see, I just see people... and, and my mother was like that though...she just loved different people, she loved to understand. So, perhaps there's also a familial, um, tone, uh, undertone to it...Tolerance, uh, curiosity, liking to know. She loved to know all about other, um, religions and cultures and experience that. So yeah, openness... I, I, I find, do find it difficult when everything is, sorry, excuse the pun (laughs) black or white dichotomous because it divides rather than integrates... you're missing out on an awful lot of similarities as well as differences, but there are so many different similarities... recently, I have seemed to have got a lot of people who from different ethnic backgrounds and different cultures and just, I just love learning about how they see it. So, I think it is that openness. [Tasmin: 850-884]

Although Tasmin acknowledged that she is White, she simultaneously rejected the concept of racialisation. This seemed to create a quandary in which she appeared keen to avoid being restricted by the concept of Whiteness in the way that Hannah and Patrick were, and yet her experience still conveyed a sense of entrapment. If she acknowledges a broader phenomenon of Whiteness, then by her own definition she is

being closed and intolerant, the antithesis of her values and perhaps more widely, the humanistic values of CoP that emphasise the uniqueness of the individual. In trying to transcend Whiteness, she appears to have bound herself to it.

For some contributors, the ambiguity, anxiety, and distrust that they expressed towards themselves, the Other, and an ambiguously constructed Whiteness appeared to leave them feeling stuck. Patrick shared that although there had only been a couple of times where he was aware of his Whiteness in his role as a counselling psychologist on the few occasions when he had worked with a REM person, he avoided potentially relevant exploration due to its potentially 'racial' content. His sense of distrust appeared fundamental to his inability to act in this clinical scenario:

...there was stuff that maybe I didn't really go anywhere near for fear of it sounding racist...if we'd kind of gone further, I would've had to have worked through my own kind of anxiety around racist trope...the expectations of the immigrant parents and, and, and so on. Um, and that might have been something that I would have been much more aware of the need to sensitively manage as a white person, talking to, um, a person of kind of South Asian background. (R: What do you think the concern was there?) Patrick: From my side that I would come across as racist, that I would come up as kind of buying into a stereotype...So, I'm sure that if I had have raised it, I don't know how I would've done it, but I would've probably had massive kind of caveats. I mean, I do it very much with my clients, trans clients. I said, look, I'm aware, I'm a cis man (R: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm) I, I have a lot of experience of working with trans people, but I'm not trans myself and so, there's a limit, there's a kind of a point at which this is not my lived experience. Um, and I suppose if that might have been part of what I would've talked about with her...but, um, I would've been aware of my own fear of being racist or appearing racist or saying something inappropriate...like, what language do I use to describe my client? You know, she, is she an Asian client, is she South Asian? Is she a person of South Asian background? You know, it's like, is that a black person or is that an Afro Afro Afro African American? [Patrick: 5237-5282]

In Patrick's anxiety not to harm or offend his client, he appeared to filter himself. The contextual linguistic framework available to him seems prescribed yet ambiguous. This seems specific to the phenomenon of Whiteness because he appears able to access what he would say if he were working with a trans person, an alternative aspect of difference. There is a sense of uncertainty, fear, and distrust in how he could articulate himself within the relational space as a White therapist with a REM client and a sense of distrust in the general discourse. There is no language to express what he experiences that is without potential consequences, therefore what he perceives from within his positionality of Whiteness becomes unutterable and limits the scope of his therapeutic intervention.

When asked about her day-to-day experience of Whiteness, Hannah responded by saying that there is too much of it where she lives and that White people en masse scare her due to the culmination of their collective 'racial' prejudice. This seemed to reinforce her conceptualisation of White people, including herself, as inherently dangerous and problematic. Like Patrick, Hannah described her struggle to find the language to speak from a position of Whiteness and associated privilege as she cannot trust how she will be perceived. Although Hannah described being able to challenge other White people on an individual basis, it seemed that due to positioning herself as part of the problem of Whiteness, she could not find a way to speak out on a broader scale within her role as a counselling psychologist despite her expressed desire for CoP to be a diverse field that offers support to the majority and not just a select few.

...it feels like I, um, part of the problem in that, in that debate, not personally, but objectively, I am. I'm part of the, the white mass that won't give over their resources and continue to, um, continue to, um, take all the privilege, you know? Take up all the space and take that for granted. And, um, that makes me sad, that really makes me sad, but it also makes me hypervigilant for racial prejudice. I think really hypervigilant because, um, I want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem...it's a position, I've always felt challenged to present any training, because of being a white...working to middle-class woman, hetero woman, you know, with all of this great range of privilege standing up there talking about racism, you know? I just haven't felt that I've

had, you know? I haven't felt confident enough to do that, and that I wouldn't be met with, um, you know, some kind of, um, maybe hostility, but certainly sort of a querying or a questioning as to how I felt I was positioned to do that. Was I not just merely representing the white privilege again? How I can even talk about their experience, you know? [Hannah: 389-406]

Hannah's difficulty in finding the appropriate language appeared to be specific to her concern about how she could be received and responded to by the Other. It seems that she has not been able to find a place to speak from within her positionality of Whiteness that does not expose her as part of the problem. Everywhere feels risky because she has already anticipated that what she says will be misconstrued, and the implications seem too far-reaching. She later spoke about gaining 'permission' from an influential REM figure within CoP to design some 'race' related training based on well-received research she had done but that this had not resolved her concern enough to mobilise her.

Both Hannah and Patrick's accounts conveyed a preoccupation with how they might represent themselves negatively if they openly talk about Whiteness, especially in face-to-face formats with the Other. This finding reveals the paucity of the available language to speak about Whiteness as a White person. Heidegger (1947/1993) stated that "Language is the house of Being" (p.239)" meaning our understanding of our Being is shaped by the language that we use to express it. It appears that Hannah, like Patrick, cannot create her Being in relation to Whiteness as there is no home for it in the available language. Without this access to language, the contributors cannot address 'race' related issues in their professional practice, which presents a barrier to them working with 'race' related oppression as it presents inside and outside of the therapy room.

In the theme 'Whiteness is a trap', Whiteness has emerged as an experience of restriction that contrasts with the relative sense of freedom that other aspects of Whiteness afford the contributors. In the previous two themes, Whiteness emerged as an absence of thought and awareness, yet the current theme suggests that when it does become central, this creates hyper-vigilance and preoccupation set within a 'racial' paradigm about how the self may be revealed negatively to the Other. This

appears to result in a sense of feeling 'stuck', not daring to say too much, if anything at all, in case it betrays something unfavourable or problematic about the self. Whiteness appears to be paradoxically constructed as something both tangible (e.g. privilege, prejudice) with right and wrong ways to speak and behave but also ambiguous which gives it a sense of danger, not just to the self through misrepresentation but also as something insidious that lives within the contributors which will inevitably cause harm to the Other. A sense of risk and distrust is heightened by a concern that the contributors would not even know if they were being harmful. This appears to result in a significantly limited ability to Be in relationship with the Other, resulting in a loss of authenticity and connection that is integral to the role of a counselling psychologist.

The following and final theme presents how Whiteness interacts with the contributors' sense of identity.

#### **4.6.4 Emergent theme 4: Whiteness is a conditional home**

A home is often understood as a place of occupation or dwelling, a place where one is at rest, where one experiences a feeling of belonging that can be intrinsically linked to one's identity and a sense of being-in-the-world (van Manen, 2016). The contributors appeared uncertain about how to occupy and make a home within Whiteness. Indeed, there did not seem to be such a home in Whiteness as a standalone, ambiguous construct, and none of the contributors overtly expressed a sense of belonging to or wish to belong to it. For most contributors, it did not seem possible to reconcile the negative connotations of Whiteness with something they could or would want to make a home in. Whiteness appeared as an externally located concept that was imposed onto their identities as a social categorisation rather than an innate or integrated sense of self. A tension emerged between the imposition of Whiteness onto their identities and trying to make this construct inhabitable. This appears to be unique to the phenomenon of Whiteness because there was no such experience of imposition conveyed around other aspects of identity such as gender, class, or sexuality.

In various ways, all the contributors seemed to want to separate and distance themselves from Whiteness. Tasmin and Angela appeared to do this by expressing their objection towards being defined by a homogenous construct that feels essentially meaningless to their sense of themselves and their view of the world and emphasised other aspects of their individuality. The other contributors appeared to do this by constructing Whiteness as a tangible and insidious system that they felt invaded by or needed to untangle themselves from, overtly expressing their disdain for it. This desire to separate or distance seemed to be unique to the phenomenon of Whiteness as there was no such occurrence for other concepts related to identity. With no obvious home in Whiteness as an abstract and standalone construct, the contributors appeared to seek homes for themselves within either sameness or difference.

Tasmin appeared to demonstrate this desire to separate and distance herself from the construct of Whiteness for much of her interview. When I asked her to describe an object that spoke to her lived experience of Whiteness, she responded by stating that she could not think of anything and that she was being rebellious, explaining that she did not like the definition of Whiteness because she is defined by a lot more. Whilst exploring this rebelliousness, Tasmin mentioned Desert Island Discs (a radio show where people choose pieces of music that define their lives), stating that if she had to choose discs that characterised her sense of self, they would be about defining periods of her life and not about Whiteness. I asked her if there was a piece of music that spoke to her experience of Whiteness, and through this metaphor, she seemed able to express something that had previously been unutterable.

...Whiteness, if, if it was, it would be someone like Rachmaninoff's piano concerto, because it's so...it's that sense of...Rachmaninoff wasn't, wasn't British (laughs), he might, I don't know, he, he's probably white but...for me, it encompasses a whole sense of passion and, um, crescendo and softness...I wouldn't necessarily go for, uh, reggae. I like reggae, but it wouldn't do anything to calm me...it's colourful and you can get that sense of colour, but it's that sort of strongness...a sort of sense of achievement, I guess, and depth and solidness, but calm...Like being at home, feeling at home, feeling comfortable...I'm actually now trying to compare it to some sort of Caribbean type music. And I guess that would be the same sense someone from the

Caribbean would have of, feels like that represents our, uh, our culture, our way of being, um, like, uh, the, when we dance in Diwali with the Gurkhas, it has a different kind of rhythm... but I don't feel as I can just go "Oh, it's Rachmaninoff" (sighs) (drops shoulders) (laughs), or, "oh, it's a lovely piece of..." almost north, northern European, is, is the sense is of that. So, it must represent the sense of being in the right place for you at that time. [Tasmin: 1062-1089]

Tasmin appeared to be talking about Britishness before recalling that Rachmaninoff is not British and adjusted this to northern Europeanness. By conceptualising Whiteness as a geographical location, she appeared to find a home within it that has meaning, belonging and a sense of identity that did not appear to be possible when she conceptualised it as a standalone, abstract construct. However, she had to create a contrast with a geographical Other to inhabit this geographical and national conceptualisation of Whiteness. The geographies that she chose to create this contrast were specific to regions usually associated with Blackness and Brownness. In doing so, she seemed to create a dichotomy of sameness-difference and positioned her home within sameness.

Angela also appeared to tie Whiteness to a geographical location to find a sense of sameness and thus home in Britishness and, more specifically, Englishness in the metaphorical object of Radio Four (a British radio station). When I queried that Radio Four seemed to symbolise the more positive attributes of Whiteness for her, Angela responded by clarifying that it was because "there's no abuse on it". Like Tasmin, she appeared to utilise a contrast with a geographical Other to define this specific type of sameness to occupy it more fully.

I love Radio Four...I love The Archers, so that feeling British...so much interesting and so much like home... It's something about it being very, maybe English rather than British... I don't know how many people in Africa and Asia listen to Radio Four right now, but I wouldn't imagine that many. [Angela: 1704-1722]

Constructing a home in sameness appeared to require Angela and Tasmin to define how they are different from the Other i.e., 'I am this because I am not that' and 'you

are from there, so you like that and not this'. The figurative lines drawn to separate the characteristics of geographical sameness, e.g., Britishness/northern Europeanness (Rachmaninoff, Radio Four) vs. geographical Otherness (reggae, celebrating Diwali), seemed reductive and seemed to lack nuance. Even within the sense of sameness, there was even more specificity, not just European but northern European, not just Britishness but Englishness. The characteristics of the self and the Other were narrowly defined, perhaps to create enough of a distinction within an arbitrary construction of difference.

Despite their objections to being defined 'racially', in their excerpts, Tasmin and Angela do not appear to have transcended a 'racial' paradigm to connect with all the nuance and subtleties of their individualism and the individuality of the Other because both have been reduced to caricatures of specific regions. This creates a minimal range within which to Be, express and connect and appears to undermine the importance they both place on individuality. Perhaps this delineation of sameness and difference reflects Tasmin and Angela's challenge of trying to make a home within the externally enforced social construction of Whiteness that they experience as essentially meaningless to their identity. Although they criticised the concept of Whiteness from a personal perspective, they did not express a critical view of Whiteness that acknowledged its oppressive function, rather it seemed to be their sense of individuality that was most at stake.

Unlike Tasmin and Angela, other contributors had been unable to find a home in Whiteness by conceptualising it geographically or nationally as they did not recognise themselves as fitting into this interpretation of Whiteness. They experienced Whiteness as having levels, and these levels are not without a value judgment. The higher up you are, the more value, worth and status you are perceived as having. Rob, Patrick, and Annabelle had all felt Othered at various points in their lives because of the hierarchical and intersectional organisation of these levels, and all had felt excluded from Britishness. Rob experienced this because of his family's persecuted religious background, Patrick because of his experience growing up gay in a colonial context, and Annabelle because of her family's cultural heritage, physical features, and way of being that made her appear 'foreign' to other White British people.



It's a taboo topic in my family....there is a sense of otherness, white that's non-white...or at least non, non-the norm. The, the, the doesn't fit well into the hierarchy...it's always been hidden, hidden conversation...a sense of this hiddenness and a wrongness and a bias and society frowning...[Rob: 3354-3370]

...I think what intersects onto that, so my own experience of growing up gay in XX and in a very, um, homophobic, macho...a very patriarchal form of white maleness...I feel very oppressed by that idea of Whiteness. Um, so I rejected on all sorts of different levels from a sexuality dimension, but also from a, um, a kind of racist white supremacist position...I just think that's not something that I want to be associated with...you know, how do you, how do you occupy that with pride?... So, I suppose I know that I'm white, um, I'm ashamed of my connection with XX whiteness. (R: Mm-hmm) It's something that I think I should, I wouldn't want to be proud of. I have absolutely no desire to connect with, uh, other white people from that cultural background. So, whiteness in that cultural context means... is synonymous with all of those (R: Mm-hmm) things that I find disgusting now as a, as an idea, but personally oppressive in terms of my, my sort of identity and I was the, the person that was kind of bullied and spat on (R: Mm-hmm) as a, as a white person who didn't conform to whiteness in that cultural stereotype, which is very much actually about white male, male...yeah, white maleness...[Patrick: 4527-4608]

I was a foreign kid and my experience of that started at school where none of my teachers ever pronounced my name properly. Um, so I never considered, I wouldn't have thought of myself as white because I was always the, the foreign kid...all these things I've sort of noticed from, from very early on that gosh, I'm a bit louder, I'm a bit, ugh, my foods all this, or even I would wear more colours in clothes and stuff. There was nothing, you know, conservative about it because that fitted what I knew to be home, um, as well. [Annabelle: 2174-2177]

Patrick grew up outside of Britain in a colonial setting and was positioned by his family and extended community as belonging to a particular construction of Whiteness

predicated on the explicit idea that White people were superior to Black people who were discursively positioned as objects of derision and fear. He explained that he noticed Whiteness early on in his life because it gave him access to a particular way of living that was denied to Black people. The root of this belonging was explicitly tied to the geographical location of Britain, at the very top tier of Whiteness – aristocratic Englishness. However, upon arriving at boarding school in Britain, Patrick learned that for those who find their home in this geographical and masculine interpretation of Whiteness, he did not belong:

...I didn't fit in at all and was not kind of welcomed...by the kind of white, British people...(R: Mm-hmm) Um, and generally all of my friends were foreigners...we were all basically the outcasts because we were not British. (R: Mm-hmm) You know, we think about that kind of idea of like, okay, so you are white there, so you must kind of connect with white people...which is not the case. (R: Mm-hmm) At least for me and I think that had a lot to do with me being gay, had a lot to do with me not being particularly sporty. It was quite a blokey, sporty school and I didn't fit in to that extent... I think it did have a lasting legacy in terms of, uh, how anxious I feel about being white, um, and not offending people who are not, but also that I didn't really fit in...You know, it was not like I came home to my people (R: Mm-hmm) It was not that at all...you didn't really belong there, you didn't really belong here either. And I certainly have that experience, certainly that is still with me. And that's the legacy, I suppose. [Patrick: 4703-4733]

Patrick appeared to understand his Whiteness as not only a racialised phenomenon but also as a gendered one with traditional roles for men and women which he does not fit into. It appears that he understands Whiteness as a hierarchy, whereby to be White and gay is different to being White and heterosexual.

Rob, Patrick, and Annabelle have all seen and experienced Whiteness as a rejecting, excluding and hostile construct, and they reject it in turn. This rejection seems both reactive and proactive, reactive in the sense that this 'seeing' comes from their experience of being rejected and proactive in their search for a new home. Whilst all three contributors acknowledged that they are privileged by Whiteness, recognised

that they have the option of hiding in Whiteness and may be positioned there by others who are not White (particularly as they now have the status of psychologists that may help them to pass as higher status within the hierarchy), this would just be a place to hide and not a place to belong. For those who are at the top of the hierarchy of Whiteness, neither Patrick, Rob, nor Annabelle truly has a home there. This experience emerged in contrast with the experiences of Tasmin and Angela, who did not describe any personal experience of being excluded from Whiteness and, therefore, may find a way to make it more inhabitable.

Patrick and Annabelle came to embrace the Othered parts of their identities and seemed to have been able to make a meaningful home for themselves in their difference. Annabelle, who experienced a double rejection from White Britishness and from the side of her family that represents her Otherness, embraced the feeling of not belonging anywhere in particular and appeared to make meaning from this by trying to help people who have been Othered. Meanwhile, Patrick explained that he has come to embrace his gay identity and his self-perceived 'failure' to meet the standards of White maleness as something that ostensibly positions him by those who are higher up the hierarchy as 'less White'. He appeared to experience this positioning as a relief from the masculine interpretation of Whiteness that he finds oppressive.

So, this was my own family, you know, we were experiencing, we weren't white enough for them and we weren't foreign enough for them. And, and so from a very young child, I belonged nowhere, you know? There were, there was no case to to to belong, uh, at all which is also really strange and also because people often think about racism and stuff as a black and white issue. It's not, it's, there, it's so there, it, it has so many shades, you know, to it. And we, as I said, what we're talking about is power, one aspect, feeling that they are better than, than than the other. And I think, you know, when you're a sort 10, 11-year-old kid, you know, or, or you, you don't fucking care, you just, you just don't understand why your family can't get on or that you're not lovable. So that was the, the message from that was that I, I wasn't, that there was something wrong, there's something wrong with me. That you're like a bit of a mutt, a half-breed, a nowhere if you like, had a huge impact, I think. And I think that the, the, the irony is I think I based the rest of my life, especially after living in other countries

on being exactly that. I quite like the fact that I don't want to, I don't want to be particularly white or particularly, you know, so I'm just going to be a citizen of the world and try to balance that power where, where wherever I go, because I would hate someone to have those, those same experiences as well. [Annabelle: 2763-2782]

...I used to think of was a massive sort of disadvantage, I now think about, I think it's the, the best thing ever happened was, is in terms of being gay. Cause I just think if I was straight can you imagine the insufferable prick I could end up being, you know, like there's something about like hauling some kind of stigmatised identity that, that I think is, you know, although I've certainly found kind of difficult, but clearly is maybe the reason I'm in counselling psychology and because within maleness, or I guess I would say within white maleness, I fail to achieve the standards, the proper standards of white maleness... [Patrick: 5093-5101]

Unlike Patrick and Annabelle, Rob described being unable to find a home in his difference. He described an occasion when he had been speaking to a group of people about the religious community that his family originated from when he had been corrected on the pronunciation of their name. Rob shared his sense that his drive around causes of social activism is linked to his lack of identity and his desire to find a place to belong.

...everybody said something about their history, their past, and I mentioned this XX stuff and the name of the XX group. And actually, he corrected me and said, it's not pronounced like that, it's pronounced like this. And I was like, do you see what I mean? Like I'm so out of touch with my own history, um, I don't even know. It takes a black guy who's not even come from a XX background to tell me how to pronounce the word of the group that I come from. Um, and I got in that moment a profound sense of how envious I was. I get gains in terms of privilege, status, job opportunities but I feel like I've lost in terms of community, unity and identity. I don't have an identity, I'm still searching for it...I'm torn. Yeah. Torn. That searching, working in a group I can never belong to... So, of course this is the activist in me, you know, if it's not colour, it's climate change,

if it's not climate change its gender variance, you know, looking for a home or something....but it does still feel like I'm playing something of a sort of privileged white man's game. Uh, trying to belong. Uh, and it's very uncomfortable. Um, yeah, that bits troubling...[Rob: 3636-3677; 3810-3812; 4002-4004]

For Rob, identity appeared tied to where one belongs, so without a sense of home, he cannot have a stable sense of identity. He cannot find a home within sameness or difference, so his identity seems to have been effectively displaced by Whiteness.

The contributors' navigation of the relationship between their identity and Whiteness seemed to primarily fall on how they individually responded to their perceived positionality to the construct. None of them appeared to draw on their identities as counselling psychologists to provide a stable base or anchor point from which to make sense of their experiences. There appeared to be a gap in their knowledge about how or why 'racial' differences between (and even within) groups are constructed, knowledge that could impact how they relate to others both personally and professionally based on where lines of similarity and difference are drawn.

The theme 'Whiteness is a conditional home' revealed that none of the contributors seemed to be able to make a home for themselves within Whiteness as a standalone construct, which appeared to originate from a rejection of its negative connotations. They all seemed to display a propensity to distance themselves from Whiteness, either by declaring it as a construct that is homogenising and meaningless to their identity or by interpreting it as a tangible and insidious system that they wanted no part of. Some of the contributors were able to make Whiteness inhabitable by conceptualising it geographically as Britishness but they could only do this by engaging in Othering through a narrow 'racial' paradigm that created a tension with the value they placed on individuality. The other contributors did not have a connection to this sense of Britishness due to their own experience of feeling excluded by it. Instead, they experienced Whiteness as hierarchical and had all felt devalued and positioned low down on this hierarchy based on their intersectional identities. They looked outside of Whiteness for somewhere to belong, with varying degrees of success. Both types of responses seemed to be unique to the construct of Whiteness as this was not the shared experience for other aspects of identity such as gender or sexuality.

## **4.7 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented four emergent themes that were uncovered through a process of hermeneutic phenomenological analysis and provided an in-depth interpretation of 'that which appears' from the contributors' lived experience of Whiteness. The subsequent discussion chapter will consider these findings in the context of the current literature.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **5.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter summarises and discusses the current study's findings. Each of the study's emergent themes will be explored with reference to the wider literature on Whiteness. The quality of the current research study will be evaluated in keeping with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, which will include an exploration of how the researcher's subjective experience may have limited the research process. Clinical implications and suggestions for future research are made before the conclusions from the current study are drawn.

### **5.2 Summary of the current study's findings**

The aim of the current research study was to explore the lived experience of Whiteness for White British counselling psychologists. The contributors' descriptions of this experience have given a unique insight into an area that has been previously unexplored within the current context, epistemological position, and methodological approach. In addition to lending support to some of the current literature on Whiteness, the discussion of the findings offers new areas for consideration and exploration that may further develop this area of CoP scholarship for what has emerged as an intrinsically complex, ambiguous, and contentious topic. The exploration of Whiteness for the current study's contributors produced some universal aspects that were shared by all the contributors and are presented within the four themes: (1) Whiteness is a bypass, (2) Whiteness is a vessel, (3) Whiteness is a trap, and (4) Whiteness is a conditional home. Each of these themes will now be summarised and considered in the context of the current literature.

### **5.3 Exploring the emergent themes in the context of the existing literature on Whiteness**

#### **5.3.1 Theme 1: Whiteness is a bypass**

All but one contributor described Whiteness as a lived experience of privilege. This privilege was constructed as a 'racially' conferred ability to bypass some of life's obstacles that make actions or processes easier in comparison with the perceived experience of the Other. When contributors were in difficult situations, they described being able to navigate this difficulty more easily compared to their REM counterparts. This finding is consistent with the concept of White privilege in the literature (Carr, 2017; Clark & Garner, 2009; Helms, 2017; Moreton-Robinson, 2005). Studies by Angyal (2021) and Spanierman et al. (2017) also found that White counselling psychologists reported a similar experience of privilege, including psychic, material and professional benefits from cultural and systemic Whiteness. This sense of comparison seems crucial to the experience of privilege as it was always constructed with reference to the contributors' perceptions of how REM people experience the world and never as a standalone phenomenon. This idea of comparison is also evident in McIntosh's seminal conceptualisation of White privilege (1989, 1995) who introduced the concept by sharing examples of preferential societal conditions that she experienced compared to her REM peers. The contributors' descriptions of ease versus the perceived restriction of the Other covered a broad spectrum, from a corporeal advantage of being able to meet the primal need to keep their bodies safe, healthy, and alive, to a sense of wider social parameters whereby they have the space and permission to act, speak and move around more freely.

The ability to bypass appears to be further aided by constructs such as Britishness, further reducing friction and facilitating smoother movement through the world. Angela's description of a corporeal experience of privilege portrayed a sense of transportation and speed that seems to be consistent with Merleau-Ponty's (1945/1962) statement that "the body is the vehicle of being in the world" (p.82). Whiteness may be understood as providing a form of transportation in the form of a White body. This is explicated by Ahmed's (2007) conceptualisation of Whiteness as a bodily form of privilege that grants the ability to move through the world without losing



one's way, White bodies appear to flow whilst non-White bodies are stopped. In this conceptualisation, Whiteness can be considered as a bodily and spatial form of inheritance that allows White bodies to comfortably extend into spaces that have already taken their shape. White bodies do not have to face their Whiteness or get 'stressed' in their encounters with objects or others because they are not orientated 'towards' Whiteness like non-White bodies are (Ahmed, 2007).

Most of the contributors constructed Whiteness as a system of privilege that is imbalanced, exclusive, and unjust. However, Angela acknowledged a disparity of 'race' based privilege but viewed this as an unfortunate yet inescapable part of life and Tasmin rejected the idea of White privilege, citing that it was divisive. The literature asserts that denial of personal and systemic White privilege may be indicative of a colour-blind racial attitude (CoBRA) (Neville et al., 2000, 2001). Despite their perceived privilege's seemingly significant impact on their lived experience, most of the contributors expressed that they had not always been aware of it and that it was something they had discovered at various points in their lives through observing a contrast with the Other. Whiteness was portrayed as a protective screen behind which they could enjoy the privileges of Whiteness whilst, most of the time, bypassing the necessity to see or be exposed to the experience of those without this ability. It seemed possible for contributors to see beyond this screen and become aware of their privilege, but this awareness was experienced as tenuous and transitional. There is a potential methodological and epistemological tension in referring to an aspect of Whiteness that may be outside of the contributors' conscious awareness, as phenomenology is concerned with that which appears to conscious individuals (Heidegger 1927/1965). However, all but one contributor spoke directly about this transient and limited sense of awareness around their privilege, and therefore, it seems crucial to their lived experience of the phenomenon.

The concept of varying levels of awareness around White privilege is prevalent in the literature and appears in various models, including White 'racial' identity development, White racial consciousness, and White dialectics. Johnson (2006) asserts that certain group memberships confer power and privilege irrespective of whether an individual wants or is aware of this. A study by Ancis and Szymanski (2001) demonstrated three levels of awareness of White privilege, from a position of denial to a deep awareness

accompanied by proactive efforts to dismantle the system of White privilege. Several of the contributors spoke of when they first discovered their privilege, however, it did not appear to be confined to a linear progression because even once they had 'discovered' their privilege, their awareness waned once a contrast with the Other desisted. The current study's findings appear to be more consistent with Todd and Abrams (2011) model of White dialectics, which purports that individuals can experience tension along numerous dialectics concerning various aspects of Whiteness that can dynamically shift rather than remain static. This includes varying levels of recognition around White privilege (I am advantaged ↔ I am disadvantaged) and varying levels of awareness around being White (I am White ↔ I am not White).

When the contributors' experience of Whiteness was mediated by a simultaneous experience of oppression towards intersecting aspects of their identities, the contributors expressed that they experienced Whiteness as the dominant factor that determined their experience in the world. Patrick and Rob conveyed a paradoxical experience of Whiteness whereby they were simultaneously Othered but retained their privilege (ability to bypass) by hiding or masking their difference with Whiteness. Their descriptions gave the impression that to show their difference was to choose difficulty and to relinquish the safety and ease that come with the ability to bypass. However, choosing to retain this ability appeared to come with a cost. To protect themselves from discrimination, they could not be their authentic selves and had to conform to the very construct that oppressed some aspects of their identities. These findings are consistent with the intersectional conceptualisation that Whiteness is interwoven and co-constructed alongside other identity categories central to its dynamics and experience (Ferber, 1998; Frankenberg, 1993). The current study's findings lend support to the concept of White privilege and present a nuanced picture of a privilege that endures despite oppression if one is willing to hide their authentic selves with Whiteness.

### **5.3.2 Theme 2: Whiteness is a vessel**

A description emerged from the contributors' accounts of an experience of Whiteness as a vessel that only becomes imbued with meaning when it meets the difference of a

'racially' different Other. This produces a comparison which allows the contributors to notice Whiteness in a way that is not usually possible as without this contrast the phenomenon appears to be experienced as an essentially meaningless void. The meaning that Whiteness takes on for the contributors seems to depend on what aspect of Whiteness is being brought into their awareness. The two aspects that emerged from the contributors' descriptions were perceptions of physical difference and disparity in privilege. When physical difference brought Whiteness into their awareness, some of the contributors appeared to observe the body of the Other with fascination. They seemed to attribute meaning to the difference and made assumptions about the Other based on this difference e.g., about their country of origin. Hannah and Angela shared examples of times when the body of the Other was experienced as so removed from their own that it seemed to inhibit them from relating beyond this perceived Otherness. This was illustrated by Hannah's shock when she inevitably discovered the physical similarities between herself and the Other. When some contributors were in contexts where Whiteness was not normalised and they temporarily became the Other, their usually imperceptible Whiteness became more obvious to them. This seeing and being seen seemed to disturb the usually vacant and essentially meaningless state of Whiteness as illustrated by Tasmin, Patrick and Rob's expressions of annoyance, amusement and fear.

This construction of Whiteness as a vessel that only becomes perceptible when it meets the difference of the Other seems consistent with phenomenological thought on how individuals make meaning from their experiences. Phenomenologists argue that experiences, objects, and events only hold meaning because human beings confer them with meaning (Jones, 2003) and this meaning resides within the context of the experience (Palmer, 1969). If the contributors' context is one that ascribes no meaning to Whiteness, then it would follow that the contributors may not either. Sue's (2004) formulation of 'ethnocentric monoculturalism' appears relevant to this phenomenon, a process whereby societal norms, teachings and values centred around Whiteness are reflected so consistently that Whiteness becomes 'invisible' and meaningless. When Whiteness becomes imbued with meaning, the contributors' descriptions of fascination and annoyance may speak to how engrained Whiteness is as a baseline, default norm and how unusual any disturbance to this norm is.

When privilege was the aspect of Whiteness that was brought into the contributors' awareness, this appeared to imbue it with a different experiential quality than that of physical difference. Most of the contributors conveyed, either explicitly or implicitly, feelings of discomfort that included embarrassment, shame, guilt, shock, and horror. This theme echoes the existing research on the uncomfortable emotional responses that White people experience when reflecting upon various aspects of Whiteness, including White privilege (e.g., Ancis & Szymanski, 2001; Arminio, 2001; Hays et al. 2004; 2007a; Thompson & Neville, 1999). Spanierman and Heppner (2004) purported that holding a dominant position in an unfair system of a 'racial' hierarchy results in various emotional, cognitive, and behavioural 'costs' to White people. Higher levels of emotional costs (e.g., sadness, anger, and guilt) are reportedly associated with more multicultural education, increased 'racial' awareness, positive attitudes towards REM people and increased cultural sensitivity (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004; Spanierman et al., 2008). The contributors described the various ways that they had tried to dispel this discomfort, which gave the impression that they were symbolically trying to 'empty' the vessel of Whiteness of any meaning and return to an undisturbed, comfortable void. This seemed to be illustrated in Angela's description of trying to diminish the difference between her and a Black hotel worker when the perceived disparity in their positions left her feeling uncomfortable.

There appear to be similarities between the contributors' apparent attempts to 'empty' the vessel of Whiteness and Rasmussen and Salhani's (2010) assertion that when emotional discomfort around 'race' related issues reach high enough levels, individuals may experience 'obsequious guilt' or 'guilty Whiteness' (Mitchell, 2000) whereby attempts to alleviate feelings of guilt and shame can inhibit making meaningful reparations. This seemed particularly evident in Hannah's description that she may have used 'unhelpful' methods in response to her guilt and shame around her privilege that left her pondering whether her actions were in service of herself or the Other. Hoffman (2022) stated that such emotions can be utilised productively and creatively if they are reframed as motivation to address one's participation in Whiteness and to aid the dismantling of it. This occurs if one can develop the ability to stay with difficult emotions, listen to them, and act responsibly. However, what appears to be missing from some of the contributors' accounts is an ability to harness the discomfort that becoming aware of privilege creates without acting to dispel it. Todd

and Abrams (2011) encourage the pursuit of 'authentic Whiteness' which includes the ability to hold the tensions of a privileged position whilst engaging in anti-racist behaviour. For some, White authenticity may be sitting with the ambiguity and discomfort created by struggling with the complexities of Whiteness without avoidance or turning away (Todd & Abrams, 2011).

### **5.3.3 Theme 3: Whiteness is a trap**

All the contributors' descriptions conveyed a sense of entrapment that appeared to be linked to how ambiguously they had constructed and understood the construct of Whiteness. Most of the contributors constructed Whiteness as a universal given that divides people across 'racial' lines. The assumption for most contributors seemed to be that all interactions with the Other would occur within a 'racialised' paradigm. Even Tasmin, who expressed her rejection of a 'racial' paradigm, appeared to convey a paradox where her experience of Whiteness was constructed around trying to avoid it. The contributors' ambiguous understanding of Whiteness appeared to infuse it with a sense of risk, particularly as some of them were afraid of enacting something harmful outside of their awareness. The contributors alluded to there being right and wrong ways to speak and behave, yet it did not seem clear to them what these right and wrong ways are. A sense of distrust, anxiety, and shame pervaded relationships with the Other, and the contributors appeared to respond to this with hyper-awareness, vigilance and diluted self-expression. The contributors seemed to experience a restrictive space to Be and relate, characterised by a loss of authenticity and a detachment from the humanity of the self and the Other. This was particularly evident for Hannah, who could no longer just Be with her friend once she had constructed Whiteness as something concrete and harmful that she would inevitably perpetuate.

The contributors' views on their positionality with Whiteness appeared to lack nuance. They either constructed it as something inherently dangerous that they are inevitably and constantly at risk of perpetuating, or they rejected it completely. There did not appear to be a 'middle ground' whereby they could try to relate outside of a racialised paradigm yet still acknowledge the imposition of one and the associated consequences. The quandary experienced by the contributors is understandable – to utilise the concept of 'race' in any capacity is to arguably maintain a process of

racialisation (Dalal, 2006), but to avoid speaking of it at all risks reinforcing Whiteness (DiAngelo, 2012) and in a clinical setting may create an environment where REM clients are unable to explore and process the impact of 'race' related issues on their mental health and wellbeing (Beck, 2019). This was particularly evident in Patrick's example of not knowing how to explore 'racial' issues in a therapy session with a REM client for fear of sounding racist. This experience is consistent with the suggestions of Williams et al. (2022), who highlight that some White therapists may be afraid of acknowledging differences with clients due to a fear of being perceived as racist. The ambiguity, anxiety, and distrust that contributors expressed towards themselves, the Other, and the wider construct of Whiteness appeared to leave them feeling 'stuck', inhibiting and immobilising their ability to speak or act in some situations.

It was apparent from the contributors' accounts that there was a lack of available language to create their Being in relation to Whiteness. This appeared to be compounded by their impression that there are right and wrong things to say. There is apparently no place for the contributors to be vulnerable, take risks, or know how to respond if they do inadvertently say something 'wrong' in their interactions with the Other. Heidegger (1927/1962) purported that our understanding of our Being is shaped by the language that we use to express it. If there is no available language, or if the available language is extremely limited, then the contributors' understanding of their Being in relation to Whiteness is similarly limited. This is perhaps telling of wider difficulties with language in relation to 'race' related topics in both the existing academic and grey literature and in wider societal discourse. Even basic terminology such as 'race' and 'racism' are conflated (Carson Byrd, 2011; Haeny et al., 2021), utilised ambiguously, or misapplied completely in the literature, therefore providing a foundation for discussion that is inherently unstable.

Heidegger's (1927/1962) concepts of 'thrownness' and 'fallenness' appear to be relevant to this experience of 'stuckness'. Thrownness refers to the condition of being thrown into the world in all its historical, cultural, and existential contexts. When we are thrown into the world, we are in a condition of falling. Fallenness occurs when Being has fallen away from the authentic self and has fallen into the world e.g., away from an authentic way of relating and into a world dominated by a racialised paradigm. As fallen beings, individuals lose their individuality and adopt an inauthentic mode of

individual existence. However, because human beings are capable of understanding, it is possible to throw off the thrown condition in a movement where one seizes hold of one's possibilities and acts. This movement is called projection (Entwurf), and it is the very experience of what Heidegger (1927/1962) calls freedom (the experience of demonstrating one's potential through acting in the world). To act in this way is to be authentic and could be viewed as the antithesis of entrapment.

What was noticeably absent in the contributors' accounts was any sort of framework or training that they could draw on to 'act'. This is consistent with findings from Campbell-Balcom and Martin-Berg's (2019) UK-based study where counselling psychologists expressed how a lack of direction in professional guidelines around how to apply anti-discriminatory practice contributed to feelings of uncertainty, hesitancy, and defensiveness. A framework that already exists in the CoP literature that appears to provide potentially transferable guidance to Whiteness and other 'race' related topics is White and Shullman's (2010) ambiguity centred learning leadership skillset model with its focus on moving away from a preoccupation with a fear of failure, risk tolerance, asking questions even when an area is outside of acknowledged expertise and tolerating conflicting ideas, approaches, and realities. Such a framework may serve as a tool to cultivate authenticity and freedom in the face of ambiguity produced by Whiteness.

#### **5.3.4 Theme 4: Whiteness is a conditional home**

Ahmed (2007), drawing on the work of Fanon (1986), states that, through histories of colonialism, the world became orientated around Whiteness and therefore, to be at home in the world is to be able to inhabit Whiteness. This sense of being at home is measured by the degree of orientation and comfort that one experiences in the world, both corporeally and socially (Ahmed, 2007). As discussed in theme 1: Whiteness is a Bypass, the contributors' experience of Whiteness has been one of relative ease and comfort, and so by this definition, it could be deduced that all the contributors experience a sense of being at home in the world. However, the contributors' descriptions of how they inhabit Whiteness portrayed a more complex picture as they appeared to be uncertain about how to occupy and make a home within Whiteness as a standalone, ambiguous construct. Their descriptions gave the impression of an

external construct that had been imposed upon them by wider society rather than an innate or integrated part of their identities. The contributors' ability to inhabit Whiteness appeared to be conditional upon how well they could integrate it into their sense of identity. Most of them expressed that they did not feel a sense of belonging or a wish to belong to Whiteness, and all of them tried to distance themselves from it in various ways. The experiences of imposition and distancing were not expressed for other aspects of identity, so they appear to be unique to the contributors' experience of Whiteness.

Dalal (2006) states that we cannot not belong. To create a sense of belonging and thus home within the construct of Whiteness, Tasmin and Angela seemed to conceptualise it geographically and nationally (as Britishness, Englishness, Northern Europeanness) and contrasted this with a geographical Other (referencing regions associated with Blackness and Brownness). This appeared to create an arbitrary dichotomy of sameness and difference characterised by narrow frames of understanding the self and the Other, grounded in a 'racial' paradigm that lacked the nuance and subtleties of individualism. These findings appear to be consistent with Dalal's (2006) proposal that '...in order to belong and to be included, we are obliged, in that same existential moment, to exclude...' (pg.159). It is arguably impossible to find and name the essence of any particular 'us' such as Britishness (because within this concept, there is heterogeneity rather than homogeneity), so one must look to the 'not us' (even though there is no homogeneity here either). The essence is therefore defined by what is absent, less by what it is and more by what it is not (Dalal, 2006). In trying to make the abstract and imposed construct of Whiteness more inhabitable, it appeared that Tasmin and Angela may have reinforced it as a 'real' construct that can only exist through Othering, thereby potentially limiting their ability to relate in a holistic way.

Unlike Tasmin and Angela, contributors Rob, Patrick and Annabelle have been unable to make a home for themselves in either an abstract or a geographical construction of Whiteness because they do not view themselves as fitting in either of them. They perceive Whiteness as a hierarchy with a corresponding attribution of worth, value and status. They all shared experiences of being Othered based on their perceived position on this hierarchy because of intersecting aspects of their identities such as sexuality,



cultural and religious heritage, and physical features. They appeared to experience Whiteness as tangible, rejecting, and oppressive. Their positioning on this hierarchy may have allowed them to 'see' Whiteness differently than Tasmin and Angela, who did not share any experience of being positioned outside of Whiteness. These findings are consistent with Lundström's (2014) assertion that Whiteness has an internal hierarchy. Having seen Whiteness this way, they rejected it as a home and sought an alternative one in difference. Annabelle embraced the feeling of not belonging anywhere, and Patrick seemed to find meaning in the sense of difference that comes with his sexuality as something that positions him by others as 'less White'. However, Rob, whose family had become removed from their difference, was unable to find a home for himself within it and instead sought a home in the difference of Others through various activism causes in his ongoing search for an identity, sense of belonging and home.

Rob, Patrick, and Annabelle's accounts indicate that the experience of Whiteness, including the extent to which one can inhabit it, is not universal or unconditional, and this seems to be mediated by intersectional aspects of their identities. For example, Patrick's experience of Whiteness was inextricable from his experience of masculinity. In theme 1: Whiteness is a bypass, Patrick's masculinity apparently bolstered his sense of privilege (if he masks his sexuality), but in the current theme, he experiences traditional White masculinity as oppressive. Patrick appears to experience the interplay between Whiteness and masculinity as paradoxical. Although his perceived failure to meet the 'proper standards of Whiteness' is experienced as a reduction in status on the hierarchy of Whiteness and has been a source of his persecution, he constructed it as a relief because it appeared to alleviate him of some of his Whiteness and its inherent oppression. This interplay speaks to the complexity of how Whiteness interacts with identity and belonging.

Models of White racial identity development in the literature refer to how Whiteness may be 'positively' integrated into identity, and yet the intersectional factors portrayed in the contributors' accounts are noticeably absent from such formulations. Winant (2004) described White identities as complex, fractured, and full of contradiction due to the imbalance of power in society. An alternative way of conceptualising how Whiteness interacts with various aspects of identity and belonging may be through this

lens of power. For example, Patrick's experience of Whiteness as an oppressive power appears to be relieved somewhat by his maleness, yet the construct of masculinity (and implied hierarchy) simultaneously compounds it. The Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF) (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) offers a perspective to conceptualise Whiteness as power, including how it operates in a person's life, its threats, its associated meaning and impact, and individual responses to this. The PTMF is arguably relevant to all, regardless of their positioning on a 'racial' hierarchy, because it asserts that everyone is impacted by the operation of power in its various forms. However, the PTMF emphasises that some identities offer more compensatory power whilst others have a devalued status, which the findings in this theme seem to affirm.

#### **5.4 Evaluation of the current study**

van Manen (2014, 2016) states that a common issue for phenomenological research is when it is evaluated by utilising criteria that are external to the methodology, such as sample size, validation, generalisability, and saturation. This is not a dismissal of these criteria but rather an emphasis on the importance of evaluating hermeneutic phenomenological research in a way that is methodologically and epistemologically congruent. Therefore, this study's limitations are not considered in the form of a procedural evaluation but rather focused on what may have impacted the research process, including insight and integrity of interpretation. The research design's limitations and how the researcher's subjective experience may have limited the research process will be considered. This latter section is written in a reflexive style, congruent with the study's hermeneutic phenomenological position.

##### **5.4.1 Limitations of the research design**

The current study relied on snowball sampling, which may have resulted in a similar type of contributor, some of whom may share similar views due to professional relationships and friendships. This was mitigated somewhat by the fact that recruitment began with two people who started two separate chains of relationships. The interviews were held online due to ongoing limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This could have impacted some aspects of the interview process, including

rapport building, reading of body language and non-verbal cues, which may have been clearer in a face-to-face format. Due to the contentious narrative around Whiteness in the academic literature, grey literature and the wider social discourse, it is possible that the individuals who agreed to contribute to this study were those who were able to tolerate enough discomfort and risk to articulate their lived experience of what is evidently a conflicting, emotive, and ambiguous topic.

Speaking on Whiteness appears to be full of potential pitfalls, as observed in the contributors' descriptions of their concerns about saying the 'wrong' thing. The current format will not have been accessible to those who prefer to avoid the subject altogether or find the subject too challenging to speak about. There is a risk that excerpts taken out of the context of the contributors' wider life stories and the wider societal, systemic, and professional contexts within which they construct their experience may limit the representation of their lived experience. To mitigate this, lengthier excerpts of contributors' stories were presented where possible and necessary to provide a thick description of events that conveyed their experience with as much original context as possible. A contextual synopsis for each contributor could have been provided to address this further.

This study's focus on researching and discussing Whiteness may have centred and reified it (i.e., made an abstract construct appear more concrete or 'real'). Hopefully, this is allayed somewhat by the clinical implications informed by the current study's findings that may contribute to the de-centring of Whiteness in clinical practice. Corces-Zimmerman and Guida (2019) caution that the research process is not a neutral exchange of information between contributor and researcher and that when White contributors' racist or problematic beliefs go unchallenged in a research setting, they may think that such beliefs are valid and well-informed. This tension was prevalent at times, particularly when some contributors expressed colour-blind statements, described REM people in objectifying language or showed a lack of awareness of systemic racism. A research study designed from a critical Whiteness perspective would have had more scope to address such issues during the interview process. This could have been reconciled somewhat by providing more extensive follow-up information post-interview rather than just signposting to further reading.

In trying to distil the lived experience of Whiteness into delineated themes, the analysis necessarily had to simplify, condense, and untangle the thematic essences somewhat. This may have produced a portrayal of Whiteness that appears simpler and more refined than that which was experienced by the contributors or me as the researcher. This may have been reconciled somewhat by ensuring that the portrayal of the themes both in the analysis and in the subsequent discussion included the ambiguity, contradiction, entanglement, overlap and paradox of these themes. For example, the notion of privilege appears in 3 out of 4 themes and yet different qualities of the experience of privilege are presented in each. The tension within the experience of privilege can also be observed in the contradiction between the theme titles 'Whiteness is a bypass' and 'Whiteness is a trap'. Representing such complexity and ambiguity is arguably an indicator of validity in hermeneutic phenomenological research (Rashotte & Jensen, 2007).

#### **5.4.2 Limitations imposed on the research process by the researcher**

My personal, epistemological, and methodological reflexivity have been inextricably linked throughout the research process, and each component has continuously informed the other. I am mindful that Whiteness is often constructed in a fixed and concrete way in the literature and wider anti-racist discourse. I was keen to approach this study with an attitude of seeking insight rather than to confirm any prior beliefs. After over a decade of interest in the topic, though, I may have inadvertently picked out themes that are in keeping with my previous knowledge and personal experience of Whiteness. For example, I am aware that I approach discussions about Whiteness with a sense of caution, which was evident when I was exploring with one contributor when they had first noticed that they were White. I sensed they felt uncomfortable when they replied that they did not know. Due to my sense of caution, I did not pursue this explorative avenue further and went on to ask the next question. This could have limited the richness and depth of the data I collected. However, with the support of my supervisor and the scope of my methodological approach, I utilised my subjective experience to consider how my sense of caution might illuminate something unsaid by both of us about the essence of Whiteness. I was able to incorporate this insight into my analysis.

I am also aware of the impact of my distrust of White people to 'see' Whiteness, which may have impacted the data I collected. Some de-contextualisation is inevitable during the extraction of excerpts to represent themes, so I was acutely sensitive to the importance of contextualising the analysis to the lives of individual contributors and to their role as counselling psychologists so that I could present a broad and sensitive picture of their experience rather than only selecting parts that supported my perception of Whiteness. For example, when a contributor exhibited what I perceived to be a colour-blind attitude or was dismissive of Whiteness as a construct, I presented this alongside an interpretation of what might be informing their position, i.e. family values or the perceived values of CoP.

At times, I struggled to reconcile my critically aligned personal views on Whiteness with the tentativeness required of a hermeneutic phenomenological researcher. This felt especially evident during the analytical process. I was mindful of going 'too easy' on my contributors' accounts and risk centring and reifying Whiteness or going 'too hard' on them and risk enforcing my critical views to portray a position of theoretical superiority. I was particularly aware of my discomfort when I interpreted contributors' behaviour as stereotypical or inauthentic and was cautious of not wanting to take things they had said out of context or to misrepresent them in any way. Ultimately, I was able to reconcile this predicament by remaining faithful to my constructivist epistemological position, which emphasises the subjectivity of the researcher and a commitment to transparency about my impact on the research process through reflexivity (Kasket, 2011). The practice of keeping a reflexive log (Appendix N), in addition to regular journal entries, helped me to continually and immediately engage with the reflexive process and to mindfully integrate my subjectivity into the process of analysis.

I often found the process of analysis frustrating and anxiety-provoking. It took time to let go of my arbitrary need to organise the themes into neat subthemes and honour the hermeneutic phenomenological approach of letting the phenomenon's essence emerge. I felt stuck and spent long periods of time grouping and re-grouping theme titles. This resistance initially blocked my analysis, perhaps attempting to get it 'right' in a way that mirrored the 'stuckness' that I perceived in some of the contributors' accounts. As a result, the process of analysis took much longer than planned. This led

to a building resentment that left me feeling detached from the data at times and may have impacted the depth and creativity of my interpretation. Perhaps this was representative of Whiteness operating through me to sabotage my own research process, not wanting to be seen. Eventually, I realised that the process I was trying to resist, i.e., presenting the data as it emerged in four main themes with no subthemes, was the most congruent representation of the complexity, paradox and ambiguity that appeared to be essential to the phenomenon whilst ensuring epistemological and methodological fidelity.

### **5.5 Impact of the research on the researcher**

Through conducting this research, particularly the literature review process, analysis and reflexivity, I have had several revelations about Whiteness, which I will now present.

I have realised that aspects of Whiteness have been more prevalent in my life than I had previously acknowledged. For example, reading some of the contributors' accounts about how they had moulded and masked themselves to better fit in with Whiteness led me to reflect on how I might have done the same, probably because I was encouraged to growing up, and perhaps because it was just easier to fit in, even at the cost of my authentic self-expression. Now, I am more willing to share parts of myself that are not packaged to be so presentable (or so White). This includes embracing and sharing my uncertainty and curiosity rather than feeling the need to appear perceptually confident and competent, especially in academic and professional spaces. I often feel exposed when I do this and regret my 'over-sharing' immediately, but it also helps me relate more congruently and be seen for who I am. In a small way, this may help to challenge norms of Whiteness in these spaces and mirrors more closely the behaviour of role models whose vulnerability initially inspired me to become interested in this topic.

I came to this research process with fixed ideas on what Whiteness is, i.e., an insidious system of power, supremacy, and privilege that becomes obvious once you have finally 'seen it'. This seeing, cultivated through years of looking, perhaps manifested in me as a form of self-righteousness and a frustration with people who could not or

would not see it. Before this research, when it came to speaking about Whiteness with other White people, I could be binary in my thinking about whether they 'got it' or not. I can now see that this binary view may have been bolstering Whiteness rather than challenging it and that how people experience Whiteness is more nuanced than I previously realised. Now, rather than viewing Whiteness as something that exists as an independent entity that moulds to identity (i.e. I would think about 'my Whiteness' or 'your Whiteness'), I now view it as a dynamic process that is created and sustained socially and relationally. This small shift has opened space for me to consider how we might challenge Whiteness more effectively through the medium of relating. After all, it was through my own relationships that I was able to become more open and less defensive to critiquing Whiteness, both by listening to the stories of REM peers and by reading about the experiences of White role models. Only once this relational basis was established was I able to fully engage with the literature on Whiteness.

I admit to being disappointed and embarrassed by my previous naivety towards how Whiteness operates within professions and what the current study's findings imply about the field of CoP. I had initially felt perplexed by the lack of discussion and literature on Whiteness produced from a British CoP context, but now I view this silence as a manifestation of Whiteness rooted in a) the invisibility of Whiteness, especially in a predominantly White profession (both physically and in terms of the theory and research that informs it) and b) the discomfort that arises when Whiteness is exposed that leads to avoidance, distancing, uncertainty, and fear of doing or saying the wrong thing. Learning that White supremacy can manifest professionally through neutral and even seemingly benign aspects of practice (such as some diversity policies and acts of 'care') has helped me to redefine it from a monstrous thing that exists on the fringes of society to a system that is central to our everyday lives that we can invest in through even well-meaning efforts. I used to consider it the personal and professional responsibility of individual practitioners to reflect on and deconstruct their relationship with Whiteness. Having adopted the hermeneutic phenomenological view that individuals are restricted by their contexts combined with a better understanding of the CoP context from the research process, I now place this responsibility primarily at an organisational level.

As a result of the research process, I have become more vocal with people about how Whiteness could be operating in relationships and clinical practice. This has had a mixed response. Due to my openness, some colleagues have come to me to discuss how Whiteness might be playing out in their dynamics with clients or colleagues. I have noticed that when Whiteness is explicitly named and conversations like this are normalised, how easy it is to consider how we might be perpetuating racism without taking our involvement as a personal failing. Conceptualising Whiteness as a dynamic socio-relational process makes taking responsibility for our role in perpetuating it easier and less personal because it is not an innate part of our identity, i.e., we can be racialised as White and receive privileges based on this racialisation, but we can resist conforming to Whiteness. I have also experienced some colleagues looking extremely uncomfortable and shutting down when I have even used the word 'White' in reference to a problem. There seems to be so much discomfort bound up with this label that contributes to one's professional response (or lack thereof). Rather than feel annoyance or judgement towards the person behind this type of reaction, I can now view it as an expression of how self-preserving Whiteness is and try to relate to their experience by sharing my own. Although the sense of tension and trepidation when talking about Whiteness has never left me, I have found that the more I allow myself to be vulnerable and fallible in relationship with others, the less this tension restricts me from speaking and acting on issues of Whiteness.

## **5.6 Clinical implications**

The current study poses several implications that concern CoP at the individual practitioner, service delivery, training, policy, and leadership level. Although these findings are focused specifically on CoP, they appear relevant to the wider field of psychology and other psychotherapeutic professions.

A key finding was that a multi-faceted sense of privilege was central to almost all the contributors' experience of Whiteness. Upon noticing their comparative privilege, the contributors expressed shock and surprise at the treatment of the Other, implying a gap in their theoretical knowledge about the evolution and function of Whiteness. Sufficient knowledge would arguably lead to a critical awareness of Whiteness characterised by less surprise upon noticing these disparities. Most of this comparison



appeared to occur outside of their role as counselling psychologists despite evidence of 'racial' disparities in mental health and psychological service provision, suggesting that they are not as aware of it or have become de-sensitised to it in this context. This finding may reflect a lack of critique in CoP guidelines and policy and suggests a limited focus on these issues in training and ongoing professional development and in professional settings such as supervision or case formulation. The discovery that White male contributors who are positioned further up the intersectional hierarchy had experienced their privilege as the ability to hide the oppressed aspects of their identities within Whiteness when the need arose during their professional training and practice in CoP reinforces concerns in the literature about the hostility within psychological settings experienced by REM colleagues who do not have the privilege of utilising a 'White mask' to protect themselves.

Another key finding was that contributors experience Whiteness as an essentially meaningless void that only becomes imbued with meaning when it meets the perceived 'racial' difference of the Other. When the meaning of Whiteness became a 'racial' disparity in privilege, the contributors did not appear able to tolerate the feelings that accompanied this meaning and acted to neutralise them. This speaks to a preservation feature within Whiteness through its construction as an essentially meaningless void, which echoes descriptions in the literature of Whiteness as a largely invisible system of oppression. It seems important to the endurance of Whiteness that it remains invisible, meaningless, and comfortable. The current study's findings imply that giving Whiteness meaning threatens it. Therefore, holding and tolerating awareness of it could help to challenge it. CoP has an opportunity to give Whiteness meaning and make it visible through channels of well-researched CoP policy and training combined with emotional support to tolerate the discomfort that this meaning creates in training and supervision. The current lack of guidance to support practitioners in this endeavour may speak to the invisibility or meaninglessness of Whiteness at a systemic level and raises questions about whether CoP is reinforcing Whiteness by its neglect of this area as expressed by vague and arguably superficial frameworks that fail to take a hard line to address issues of equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Another finding was that the contributors had an ambiguous sense of Whiteness yet seemed to manoeuvre within a prescribed 'racial' paradigm with 'right and wrong' ways to speak and act. Their uncertainty about what these ways are seemed to create an interpersonally risky environment for the contributors characterised by preoccupation, hyper-vigilance, and self-dilution against an ambiguous sense of threat. These responses appeared to disrupt their tolerance of themselves as fallible human beings and inhibited their ability to speak or act from a place of emotional vulnerability or relational authenticity on issues of 'race' in their activities as counselling psychologists. Their binary outlook, although understandable when one considers the racialised society that contributors live and work in, is in direct opposition to the literature on Whiteness that emphasises the importance of risk-taking and the ability to learn from mistake-making when addressing 'racial' issues in practice. If qualified practitioners are not equipped to respond to Whiteness and associated issues, then this may pose limitations to the level of service they offer to REM clients and to the training of future counselling psychologists, thus reifying Whiteness in the profession. Perhaps this experience is more widely reflected by the paucity of British literature written on 'race' or Whiteness by counselling psychologists. The implication here is that the leadership level of CoP is not currently providing a facilitative environment in terms of policy, strategy, training or language to support practitioners in managing feelings of uncertainty and discomfort, being vulnerable, and taking interpersonal risks so that they can respond constructively to 'race' related issues in practice.

A final key finding was that Whiteness is experienced as imposed onto the contributors and is not a natural or integrated part of their identities. To attempt to fit this identity and perhaps cleanse it of its negative connotations, some contributors equated it with the more positive attributes of Britishness as they perceived them. This involved drawing arbitrary and stereotypical lines of similarity and difference between the self and the Other, which has implications for a restricted mode of relating therapeutically with clients positioned as the Other. For contributors who had negative associations with both Whiteness and Britishness, they rejected both and sought identity and belonging in their own Otherness. However, this rejection still has implications for relating with clients who are racialised both inside and outside of Whiteness. With REM clients, contributors could fail to 'own' their investment and positionality in Whiteness and with White clients, they could make assumptions based on personal judgements,

e.g. that White people are intrinsically harmful or hopelessly ignorant. What appeared to be missing from all contributors' interpretations of Whiteness was an awareness of how arbitrary the concept of difference is or a nuanced understanding of how we all belong to different groups at different times depending on where lines of difference are placed. None of the contributors appeared to draw on their roles as counselling psychologists to help them navigate this experience, which may indicate the absence of a clear identity in relation to Whiteness being modelled by the profession.

### **5.7 Future research recommendations**

Based on the current study's findings, it appears that the most useful focus for future research would be that which can contribute to defining a distinct position and identity on Whiteness from a British CoP perspective from which to develop our policy, strategic planning and guidelines for training and practice. Once this is more established, it could help inform wider psychological and governmental policy on 'race' related issues where guidance and leadership currently appear lacking. For example, the current study suggests that privilege is central to the experience of Whiteness and yet recent governmental literature espouses that the concept of White privilege is divisive and unhelpful. As a profession, it would be congruent with our social justice values if we could offer a robust challenge when such assertions are made rather than remaining silent.

The current study is the only piece of research I am aware of exploring that explores the lived experience of Whiteness for White British counselling psychologists. It is a small study that was not designed to produce universal applications. Therefore, further exploration and dissemination conducted with wider samples could broaden and uncover more about structures of experience that could illuminate pathways for working with Whiteness in a meaningful and relationally based way to produce further-reaching implications. Future research could incorporate the numerous psychometric tools that measure various constructs of Whiteness and other qualitative modes of data collection such as journal entries which may help contributors to express themselves more freely. Exploring the lived experience of Whiteness across diverse populations may also provide further insight into this complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. As contributors drew heavily on their personal rather than professional

experiences of Whiteness, a study that focuses more on professional settings may be useful to tease out more nuance about how Whiteness is experienced in the roles of counselling psychologists.

### **5.7.1 Addressing Whiteness at a training level**

Based on the current study's finding that contributors did not seem to have been provided with adequate training on Whiteness and 'racial' difference, further research could review the curriculums of all institutions offering CoP doctoral training in the UK. This would help to ascertain the level of 'race' related content on curriculums and its quality. Indeed, it may be useful to devise criteria for what makes good quality content based on existing international literature on the efficacy of 'race' related training courses that evaluate various aspects of Whiteness. If curriculums are found to be lacking, it may be helpful to design and trial a standardised training course on Whiteness for trainee counselling psychologists that incorporates both reflexive and relational components such as process groups, role-modelling, sharing accounts of personal experience, and journaling in addition to education on the historical psycho-socio-political processes of Whiteness and their potential impact on the practice of CoP.

Course material could focus on supporting trainees to reflect on their experience as racialised beings and develop more of a focus on how Whiteness is reinforced at the systemic level of CoP and within our individual professional practice. The design and trial of a continuing professional development course for qualified counselling psychologists may be similarly useful. Part of the development of such courses would need to investigate what provisions are needed to support trainers who are delivering emotionally laden content who could face complaints and backlash for teaching on Whiteness, clear CoP policy would help to bolster this. It may also be useful to ascertain if learning from related fields could translate to CoP. For example, Wood and Patel's (2017) 'Decolonising White psychology' workshop has been successfully implemented in clinical psychology doctoral training at UEL. The efficacy of the workshop has been attributed to factors such as implementing an intersectional focus, providing 'safe talk' guidance (Sue, 2016) and facilitating group discussion on topics such as how and when one might ask clients about experiences of racism. It may be

useful to trial a similar workshop that has been adapted for use on the CoP doctorate course to see if it is similarly well received or if there are specific barriers within CoP to implementing this type of training.

### **5.7.2 Addressing Whiteness at a clinical practice level**

The current study's findings also suggest that there is a need to foster a critical awareness of Whiteness at a service delivery level. Future research could contribute to producing a self-assessment framework that evaluates how Whiteness is operating and contributing to 'racial' disparities at various levels of service provision. Such an approach is already utilised by the Division of Educational and Child Psychology (BPS, 2023). There is also a need to explore how a critical response to Whiteness could be incorporated into professional practices such as supervision and reflective practice as such spaces could help to contain potentially inhibiting emotional responses. Ryde (2009) has proposed using their model of White awareness in combination with their suggested adaptation of the seven-eyed model of supervision to explore Whiteness for this very purpose. Mode 7 of the model (focus on wider context) is an obvious place for such discussions, but there are opportunities to bring it in at every mode. For example, mode 3 (focus on the supervisee-client relationship) may consider the impact of Whiteness on the therapeutic relationship, which would provide an opportunity for practitioners to explore issues such as the 'stuckness' expressed by some of the contributors. Research into the efficacy of this approach could be useful to ascertain how useful this focus is and to identify any additional input that may be needed before recommending its use more broadly. From a funding perspective, incorporating Whiteness into current service delivery is cost-effective as it is something that can be integrated into current macro and microstructures (i.e., from the level of service strategy down to individual supervision and therapy sessions) which is pertinent when one considers the societal cost of 'racial' disparities.

### **5.7.3 Addressing Whiteness at a leadership and policy level**

The topic of 'racial' disparities warrants further attention in strategic planning and specific guidelines for practice. A lens on Whiteness could help to drive this forward. The multi-disciplinary and CoP specific literature is replete with useful information and

resources that could be collated and utilised in this endeavour. Instead, it appears that 'race' related topics such as Whiteness get lost within generic headings of equality and diversity, as appears to be the case in the BPS strategic framework 2021-2022 (BPS, 2021). Although many issues relating to Whiteness may be transferable to issues such as gender, sexuality, disability, etc (and vice versa), there is a risk that area-specific nuance may be lost in general approaches. The current study highlights that the experience of Whiteness is intersected by other aspects of identity that reinforce its hierarchical nature. Therefore, a hermeneutic approach, i.e., a continuous cycle of considering how the parts relate to the whole and vice versa, may be useful when considering how different aspects of identity and oppression interact. An existing framework that may have the capacity to formulate and aid understanding of how Whiteness and other forms of power may interact with and impact identity is the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF) (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). Further research could explore the potential for this framework, which is already familiar and utilised within the profession, to scaffold and facilitate discussion and action on Whiteness.

The results of the current study support the broader international literature that indicates a need for an approach to Whiteness that manages feelings of emotional discomfort and vulnerability in a way that addresses uncertainty, dichotomous thinking, and an aversion to risk-taking when speaking and acting on 'race' related issues. A model that emerges from the literature which could benefit from further research in terms of how it could be applied to support this process from the level of trainees and individual practitioners all the way up to policymakers is White and Shullman's (2010). ambiguity-centred learning leadership skillset. The endorsement of a model that reframes uncertainty as an indicator of effective leadership could revolutionise how responses to 'racial' disparities are responded to. Strawbridge & Woolfe (2004) purport that knowledge in CoP can be sought through stories of human experience. To highlight the need for a change in approach, stories about the experience of Whiteness from counselling psychologists must be told to those who inform policy alongside the experiences of clients and colleagues who experience 'racial' oppression to highlight the chasm between these two positions and to help think about the resources needed to implement change. This may be achieved through collating the current research on Whiteness in the publication of papers for conferences, conducting working groups on Whiteness, and speaking at staff training events.

## 5.8 Conclusion

To conclude, the current research study presented the lived experience of Whiteness for White British counselling psychologists within four themes that captured the essential aspects of the phenomenon for this group of contributors. The findings will hopefully make a tentative contribution to the British CoP literature on Whiteness where there is currently a paucity. Although these themes are not presented as a universal representation of Whiteness, they may serve as a point of further exploration, discussion, and action, including whether there may be any echoes of anxiety, fear of offence, restrictive views of 'right and wrong' ways in which to speak and behave, or minimisation of the importance of Whiteness in the wider British CoP community. The insights gained from the contributors' lived experiences illuminate where existing psychological models may be useful in navigating some of the challenges that counselling psychologists can face when addressing Whiteness and highlight intersectional factors that mediate experience that are not currently prevalent in the constructs and models of Whiteness presented in the reviewed literature. The themes uncovered from the contributors' accounts appear to have scope beyond CoP and associated psychotherapeutic disciplines and may also have implications for working with other constructs such as gender and sexuality. A focus on Whiteness within the wider equality, diversity and social justice agenda of British CoP may contribute to a powerful, socially relevant, and responsive act of resistance against oppression and discrimination.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Ethics approval UEL

#### School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

#### NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

## For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

**REVIEWER:** Ruth Hughes

**SUPERVISOR:** Claire Marshall

**STUDENT:** Laura Williams

**Course:** Prof Doc in Counselling Psychology

#### DECISION OPTIONS:

1. **APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.
2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.
3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a



revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

**DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY**

*(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)*

**APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES**

**Minor amendments required** *(for reviewer):*

UEL no longer recommend the Samaritans as an approved organisation so this recommendation should be removed from 6.3 and Appendix C

In Appendix H the request for participants to provide an age range should be supported with suggested age ranges.

**Major amendments required** *(for reviewer):*

**Confirmation of making the above minor amendments** *(for students):*

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name *(Laura Williams)*:

Student number: u1617373

Date: 23/11/21

*(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)*

**ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER** *(for reviewer)*

Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?

YES / NO

Please request resubmission with an adequate risk assessment

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

HIGH

Please do not approve a high risk application and refer to the Chair of Ethics. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not approved on this basis. If unsure please refer to the Chair of Ethics.

MEDIUM (Please approve but with appropriate recommendations)

LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any).

**Reviewer** (*Typed name to act as signature*): Ruth Hughes

**Date:** 20/11/21

*This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee*

**RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE:**

For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UELs Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard

## Appendix B: Supervisor confirmation of minor ethical amendments

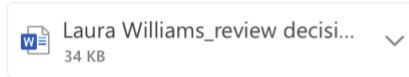
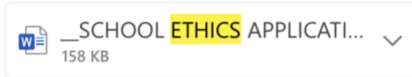


Claire Marshall

To: Laura WILLIAMS



Tue 23/11/2021 10:02



2 attachments (192 KB) ☁ Save all to OneDrive - University of East London ↓ Download all

Dear Laura,

Thank you for making the relevant minor changes to the **ethics** form as indicated by the reviewer. I think you had to put your name student number and date on the box on p.2 of the review decision letter form, which I have done for you to avoid delay. I will send these two documents attached to psychology **ethics** for their records.

You may now begin recruiting.

If you would like me to use my contracts, just send me the information about the research you would like me to share and I will send out some emails.

Best wishes,

**Dr Claire Marshall** BSc, Cert, PGCert, MRes, MA, DPsych (CPsychol, AFBPsS, HCPC, FHEA).  
**Interim Programme Director**

Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology, School of Psychology, University of East London  
Working days: Tue-Fri

## Appendix C: Participant invitation letter



### PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER

#### **The White British Counselling Psychologist: Personal and Professional Experiences of Whiteness. A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Approach**

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree it is important that you understand what your participation would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

#### **Who am I?**

I am a doctoral student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London and I am studying for a Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology. As part of my studies I am conducting the research you are being invited to participate in.

#### **What is the research?**

My research question is **‘What is the personal and professional experience of Whiteness for White British counselling psychologists?’** Although the topic of Whiteness has received some attention within the international counselling psychology literature, there is a paucity of research within a British context. I am looking to interview White British counselling psychologists with a minimum of 2 years post-registration experience in order to increase knowledge in this important area. I emphasise that I am not looking for any expertise on Whiteness or even any prior engagement with the topic. There are no right or wrong answers, my interest is solely in your subjective experience in whatever form that takes. Although part of a formal piece of research, the interview itself will be facilitated as an informal discussion guided by a series of exploratory questions.

My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that the Committee’s evaluation of this ethics application has been guided by the standards of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

#### **Why have you been asked to participate?**

I am looking for White British counselling psychologists who have been registered for at least two years. You will be receiving this invitation letter either because you have responded to my advert or because I have identified you as a counselling psychologist through a professional network e.g. a directory or faculty list. If you do not identify as White British, please disregard this letter and I apologise for taking up your time.

### **What will your participation involve?**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign an electronic consent form stating your understanding that your participation is voluntary and that you understand your rights. You will then be sent a demographics form to complete and return. The primary researcher will contact you to arrange a convenient time for an interview. You will be sent a link for an online interview on Microsoft Teams, this software is free and a download link will be included. If you would prefer a telephone interview then this can be arranged. Although part of a formal research process, the interview will be structured as an informal discussion guided by a series of exploratory questions. You are invited to bring along an object that speaks to your experience of Whiteness to the interview (e.g. a picture, poem, ornament). This is optional but may help to enhance exploration of the topic. The interview process is expected to take up to 90 minutes. There will also be an opportunity for a 10-15 minute debrief following the interview. I will not be able to pay you for participation in my research, but your participation would be very valuable in helping to develop knowledge about Whiteness within the British counselling psychology literature.

### **Your taking part will be safe and confidential**

This research has been carefully planned to ensure your safety and confidentiality. It is not anticipated that you will be adversely affected by taking part and all reasonable steps have been taken to minimise potential harm to you. Talking about Whiteness might feel unusual or even uncomfortable at times but rest assured that you will not be judged or personally analysed in any way. By participating in this research, you will be helping to increase knowledge in an important area where there is currently a paucity of work. You have the right not to answer any of the interview questions and you can stop your participation at any time. Confidentiality measures will be taken to ensure that you cannot be identified by the data collected from you, from any written material resulting from the data collected, or in any write-up of the research. More information about how your data will be treated can be found below.

### **What will happen to the information that you provide?**

All data will be stored on UEL's secure electronic storage facility (UEL OneDrive for Business and SharePoint site) which has an encryption facility for sensitive data. All email correspondence will be through UEL's secure server, and will be deleted once I have extracted and stored the relevant information. I will allocate a pseudonym on receipt of your completed consent form which will be used across your data. Your pseudonym will be

linked with the date on your consent form in a separate file with its own encrypted folder which will only be accessible by me as the primary researcher.

Your interview will be recorded on a password protected dictaphone that will be securely stored in a safe within my home. Within 24 hours, the audio files will be transferred onto UEL's secure electronic storage. After transfer, the original audio files will be deleted from the dictaphone. The audio files will then be transcribed verbatim into a Word document. Your name will be replaced by your pseudonym and any other identifying information that may arise e.g. names of other people or organisations, will be removed. The audio files will be deleted once transcription is complete. From recording to deletion, only I as the primary researcher will have access to the original audio files.

The anonymised interview transcripts will be available to me, my supervisors and my examiners during the research process. You may also request a copy of your transcript. Analysis of the data collected along with a selection of excerpts from the anonymised transcripts will appear in the research write-up and any subsequent publication resulting from the research. On completion of the research, my dissertation and your anonymised data will be archived on UEL's Research Repository which is publicly accessible. On the completion of my studies at UEL, all data stored on UEL's electronic storage facility will be deleted but will be transferred onto an encrypted USB stick for retention by me in order that it may be available for re-analysis in future research projects.

### **What if you want to withdraw?**

Your participation in this research is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. Separately, you may also request to withdraw your data even after you have participated, provided that this request is made within 21 days of the data being collected (after which point the data analysis will begin, and withdrawal will not be possible).

### **Contact Details**

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me:

Laura Williams – [u1617373@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1617373@uel.ac.uk)

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Dr Claire Marshall, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,  
Email: [c.marshall@uel.ac.uk](mailto:c.marshall@uel.ac.uk)

**or**

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Tim Lomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.  
(Email: [t.lomas@uel.ac.uk](mailto:t.lomas@uel.ac.uk))



## **Appendix D: Recruitment advert**

### **The White British Counselling Psychologist: Personal and Professional Experiences of Whiteness.**

My name is Laura Williams and I am a trainee counselling psychologist at the University of East London. I am researching the personal and professional experience of Whiteness for White British counselling psychologists. Although the topic of Whiteness has received some attention within the international counselling psychology literature, there is a paucity of research within a British context.

If you identify as White British and have been registered for a minimum of 2 years, then I would like to interview you about your personal and professional experience, regardless of your prior level of engagement with the topic. Although part of a formal piece of research, the interview itself will be facilitated as an informal discussion guided by a series of exploratory questions. I emphasise that I am not looking for any expertise on Whiteness, nor are there any right or wrong answers, my interest is in your subjective experience in whatever form that takes.

This study is supervised by Dr Claire Marshall and has ethical approval from the University of East London.

If you would like to be involved or have any questions about the research process, please email me at [u1617373@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1617373@uel.ac.uk).

## **Appendix E: Recruitment email**

Dear XX,

### **The White British Counselling Psychologist: Personal and Professional Experiences of Whiteness.**

My name is Laura Williams and I am a trainee counselling psychologist at the University of East London. I am researching the personal and professional experience of Whiteness for White British counselling psychologists. Although the topic of Whiteness has received some attention within the international counselling psychology literature, there is a paucity of research within a British context.

If you identify as White British and have been registered for a minimum of 2 years, then I would like to interview you about your personal and professional experience, regardless of your prior level of engagement with the topic. Although part of a formal piece of research, the interview itself will be facilitated as an informal discussion guided by a series of exploratory questions. I emphasise that I am not looking for any expertise on Whiteness, nor are there any right or wrong answers, my interest is in your subjective experience in whatever form that takes.

This study is supervised by Dr Claire Marshall and has ethical approval from the University of East London.

If you would like to be involved or have any questions about the research process, please email me at [u1617373@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1617373@uel.ac.uk).

Kind regards,

Laura Williams  
Trainee Counselling Psychologist  
University of East London

## Appendix F: Screening form



### **PARTICIPANT SCREENING FORM**

Thank you very much for your interest in being interviewed for my research into the personal and professional experiences of Whiteness for White British counselling psychologists.

Please fill in the below information and return it to me at your earliest convenience:

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>I confirm that I identify as White British</b>		
<b>I confirm that I have a minimum of 2 years post-registration experience</b>		

<b>Availability for interview</b>

Thank you for your time.

## Appendix G: Participant consent form



### UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

#### Consent to participate in a research study

#### **The White British Counselling Psychologist: Personal and Professional Experiences of Whiteness. A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Approach**

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature, purposes and potential risks of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my interview will be audio recorded and that this recording will only be accessible to the primary researcher. It has been explained to me how my identity will be kept confidential and what will happen to my data during and after the research process including secure storage and destruction. I understand that anonymised data will be available to the primary researcher's supervisory team and examiners during the research process and on completion of the research will be deposited on the University of East London's Research Repository which is publicly accessible. I understand that anonymised excerpts of my data may appear in the write-up of the study which will be published and publicly accessible. I also give permission for the primary researcher to retain a copy of all of my data on an encrypted USB stick for use in future analysis which may result in further research publication.

I am aware of my right to withdraw my participation from the study at any time without explanation. I am also aware that I may withdraw my data after my participation up to 21 days after collection, after this point I acknowledge that the primary researcher will own the anonymised data.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher's Signature

.....

Date: .....

## Appendix H: Demographic form



### PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

Please feel free to leave any section blank if you do not wish to disclose this information.

<b>What is your gender?</b>	
<b>What is your age range? (20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s)</b>	
<b>What is your sexual orientation?</b>	
<b>What is your religious affiliation, if any?</b>	
<b>Which, if any, class do you identify as?</b>	
<b>What is your ethnic/cultural background?</b>	
<b>How long have you been qualified as a counselling psychologist?</b>	
<b>How long have you been practicing as a counselling psychologist?</b>	
<b>What sector do you work in?</b>	
<b>How many clients to you see on average a month?</b>	
<b>How much, if any, training or CPD have you done around race, ethnicity, culture etc?</b>	

## **Appendix I: Interview preamble**

Thank you for agreeing to discuss your personal and professional experience of Whiteness with me.

I'll be asking you some exploratory questions on the topic. I want to emphasise that I'm not looking for any particular expertise on Whiteness, nor are there any right or wrong answers. My interest is in your subjective experience, in whatever form that takes.

Sometimes talking about Whiteness might feel unusual or even uncomfortable but rest assured that you won't be judged or personally analysed in any way.

You may find it helpful to write down the questions as I ask them so that you can come back to them as you're talking but I'll leave this to you to decide if that's useful.

You have the right to refuse to answer any question, to ask to come back to questions or to stop the interview at any time.

There'll be an opportunity to debrief at the end of the interview if you would like to, and you can decide this afterwards.

You're also welcome to send me any reflections that you have after the interview by email which may be included as data. You're free to withdraw your data up to three weeks after today's date.

I estimate that the interview will last up to 90 minutes but may be shorter, I'll offer you a break at 60 minutes but you're welcome to ask for a break at any time. Please be aware of your physical comfort during this interview e.g., posture support and screen brightness.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

## **Appendix J: Interview protocol**

How do you define Whiteness?

When did you first notice that you are White?

When did you first notice Whiteness more broadly?

How would you describe what it's like to be White?

Will you describe the object that you brought with you and how it speaks to your experience of Whiteness?

- If you couldn't find one, why do you think that was?

What is your day to day experience of [your] Whiteness?

- What about in your personal life? /What about in your role as a counselling psychologist?

Will you tell me about a time when you have been especially aware of [your] Whiteness?

- What about in your personal life? /What about in your role as a counselling psychologist?
- What does it feel like to be made aware of it?
- What about in this interview?

Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't talked about?



## **Appendix K: Follow-up email template**

Dear XX,

Thank you very much for contributing your time and experience in order to help co-construct the phenomenon of Whiteness with me and the other participants – it is very much appreciated.

I have attached a debrief letter.

Kind regards,

Laura Williams  
Trainee Counselling Psychologist  
University of East London

## Appendix L: Participant debrief letter



### **PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF LETTER**

‘The White British Counselling Psychologist: Personal and Professional Experiences of Whiteness. A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Approach’

Your contribution to exploring this topic has been invaluable and I am very grateful that you have given me your time. This letter offers information that may be relevant in light of your participation.

#### **What will happen to the information that you have provided?**

The following steps will be taken to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the data you have provided.

All data will be stored on UEL’s secure electronic storage facility (UEL OneDrive for Business and SharePoint site) which has an encryption facility for sensitive data. All email correspondence will be through UEL’s secure server, and will be deleted once I have extracted and stored the relevant information. I will allocate a pseudonym on receipt of your completed consent form which will be used across your data. Your pseudonym will be linked with the date on your consent form in a separate file with its own encrypted folder which will only be accessed by me as the primary researcher. Your interview will be recorded on a password protected dictaphone that will be securely stored in a safe within my home.

Within 24 hours, the audio files will be transferred onto UEL’s secure electronic storage. After transfer, the original audio files will be deleted from the dictaphone. The audio files will then be transcribed verbatim into a Word document. Your name will be replaced by your pseudonym and any other identifying information that may arise e.g. names of other people or organisations, will be removed. The audio files will be deleted once transcription is complete. From recording to deletion, only I as the primary researcher will have access to the original audio files.

The anonymised interview transcripts will be available to me, my supervisors and my examiners during the research process. You may also request a copy of your transcript. Analysis of the data collected along with a selection of excerpts from the anonymised transcripts will appear in the research write-up and any subsequent publication resulting

from the research. On completion of the research, my dissertation will be archived on UEL's Research Repository which is publicly accessible. On the completion of my studies at UEL, all data stored on UEL's electronic storage facility will be deleted but will be transferred onto an encrypted USB stick for retention by me in order that it may be available for future analysis in future research projects.

### **What if you have been adversely affected by taking part?**

I have carefully designed the research process to minimise any potential harm to you and I hope that you will not have been adversely affected by taking part. Nevertheless, talking about Whiteness may have felt unusual or even uncomfortable either during the interview or afterwards.

You may be interested in exploring Whiteness further. If so, the British Psychology Society reference library has some interesting articles. You can find this at <https://www.bps.org.uk/power-threat-meaning-framework/anti-racism/resources>

A collection of articles on race, culture and diversity can from the British Psychological Society Division of Counselling Psychology can be found at: <https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Member%20Networks/Divisions/DCoP/DCoP%20-%20Race%20and%20culture%20booklet%20web.pdf>

If you do feel that you have been adversely affected in any way you may find the following resources/services helpful in relation to obtaining information and support:

#### **Sources of support:**



0300 123 3393

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Mind provides advice and support on all aspects of mental health and offers local counselling services in many areas.



0300 304 7000

[www.sane.org.uk/support](http://www.sane.org.uk/support)

Saneline provides a national out-of-hours mental health helpline offering specialist emotional

support, guidance and information to anyone  
affected by mental illness, including family, friends  
and carers open every day of the year from  
4.30pm to 10.30pm

You are also very welcome to contact me or my supervisor if you have specific questions or concerns.

### **Contact Details**

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me:

Laura Williams - [u1617373@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1617373@uel.ac.uk)

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Dr Claire Marshall School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,  
Email: [c.marshall@uel.ac.uk](mailto:c.marshall@uel.ac.uk)

**or**

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Tim Lomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.  
(Email: [t.lomas@uel.ac.uk](mailto:t.lomas@uel.ac.uk))

## Appendix M: Reflexive journal entries

### Example 1

Today's interview was characterised by resistance/reluctance. The participant seemed to struggle to 'inhabit' their Whiteness. Most striking was when I asked about when they had first realised that they were White, and they were unable to give much of an answer to this question. This lack of an answer stayed with me for the rest of the interview, but I was unable to formulate any follow-up questions. On reflection, I felt quite 'shut down' by their response. I wonder now why I didn't ask why they think they had never realised this, but it did not occur to me as an obvious question at the time. As I listened to the short response, the absence of a realisation did feel like the answer in and of itself. It felt absolute. Even as I write this entry, I am aware that I don't have much to say after this interview which feels like a somewhat parallel process to my client. Rather than push the participant too much, perhaps it is okay that this answer was empty because maybe this spoke to this aspect of their experience of Whiteness. I felt quite awkward and at a loss for what to say at certain points, I found myself wanting more compelling depth to some of the responses which the participant did not/could not give. I am pleased that they were able to remain faithful to this experience during the interview and did not try to fill the empty space. As tempted as I was to 'push' for more reflection, something in me resisted, even if it has resulted in me berating myself now. The participant's acknowledgement of a sense of caution resonated with me too. There is something dangerous about Whiteness that one must be careful of, even as a White person. In this interview, the danger felt like not wanting to be represented as 'one of those' White people.

### Example 2

I had a dream about Nazis. I was in some sort of compound and there were people running and screaming out of a building. As I approached the building, running against the tide of people running in the opposite direction I could see through an opening. There was a crush of people, desperately trying to escape. I continued into the building. I do not know why as I did not feel comfortable but for some reason, I didn't feel directly under threat. Then a group of Nazi soldiers emerge, sneering and shouting aggressively at the fleeing people. They didn't even seem to notice me. I breathe, thankful for the mask of blonde hair and blue eyes, but I feel really, really frightened of the Nazi soldiers all the same. I was reeling from the distress of the people around me who I felt powerless to help. What does this dream tell me about Whiteness? It is not a leap to wonder if the Nazis symbolised White supremacy and although I was superficially spared the immediacy of the danger befalling the people who were trying to escape, I knew that I was not safe either. One wrong move, one tiny attempt to help one of the people around me and I too would be pursued. Is this not what White supremacy is? Superficial membership of a club that would turn on you if you stepped out of line? You can be 'acceptable' to White supremacy based on your appearance, but you are still not safe within it. I knew this in the dream, and this is probably why I was so scared.

## Appendix N: Reflexive log

Entry number	Entry description
RX1	This sounds a lot like White privilege
RX2	I am relieved that Rob and Patrick show an awareness of the entitlements and privileges that they are conferred with, particularly as White men.
RX3	I find this description upsetting, I can imagine this person walking along a long road in the heat whilst White tourists speed past in expensive cars. It strikes me how White privilege or whatever this phenomenon is that allows some White people to travel with such ease and speed, even in a country where they are a visitor in, may be bolstered even by REM people as it may well be a REM person who has arranged this transport. It seems that Whiteness may be upheld through everyone, not just White people.
RX4	The image of bodies feels key here, White bodies are streamlined whilst Black bodies meet a barrier that is both metaphorical and physical. I get the impression of hardness and harshness towards Black bodies and softness and elevation of White bodies.
RX5	The word 'foreigner' feels affronting, even though I sense that Annabelle is utilising it in a way that consciously conveys the process of Othering that is encapsulated within this term. It has objectifying connotations, like 'foreign object'. I am conscious of the reader misunderstanding Annabelle's use of this term.
RX6	I allude to this example but do not include the excerpt because of word count constraints. Although I would have included it if word count had allowed, perhaps I have deliberately avoided making too much of a feature of this due to how unsettling I find the idea that a counselling psychologist may not buy into the possibility of White privilege.
RX7	I feel moved by this description. I have experienced a couple of conversations

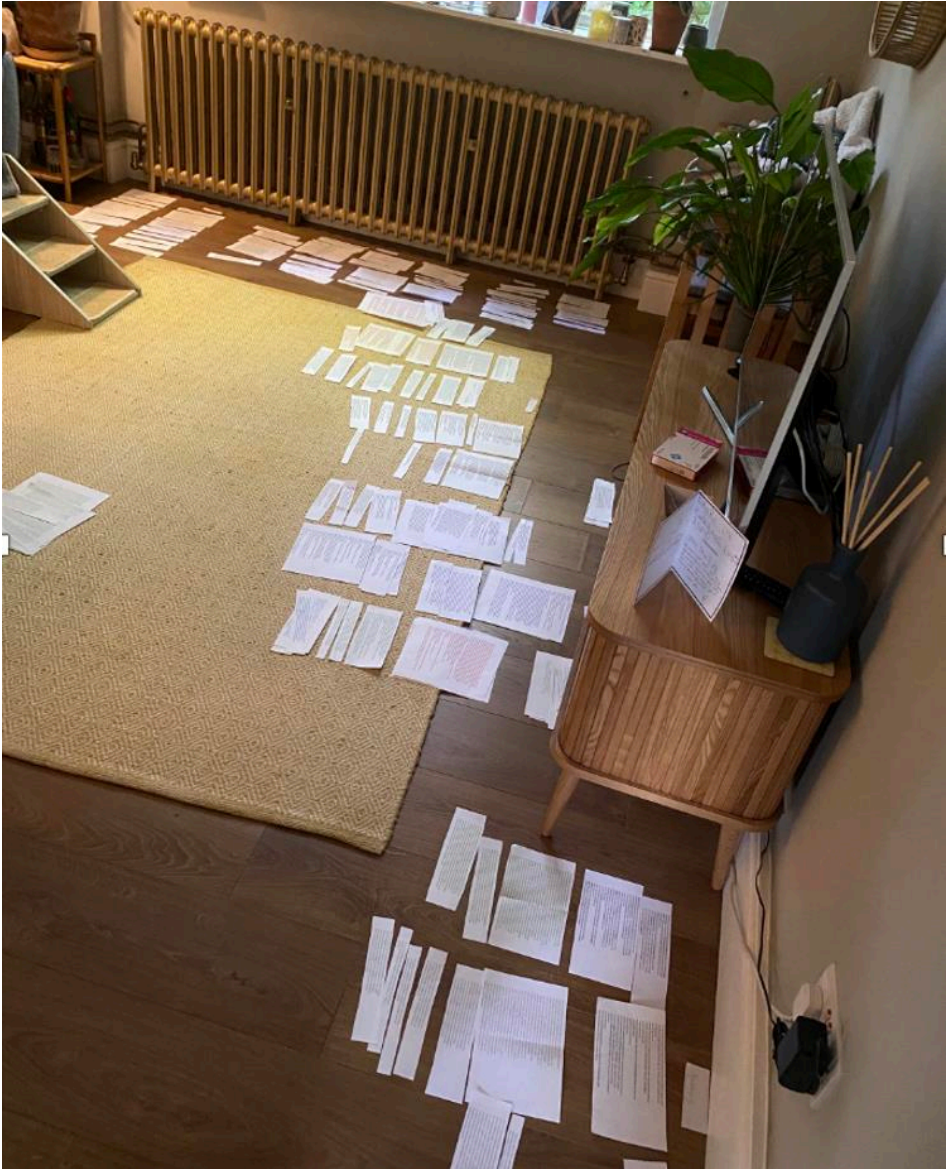
	with men lately where they have dismissed the assertion that women may feel unsafe walking around at night. This is the closest that I can get to experiencing what it must be like to have one's sense of unsafety as a racialised person dismissed.
RX8	I find this statement troubling, probably because I wonder what it says about me and indeed White people in general. I am aware of feeling slightly irritated by the notion that just because you are White, your behaviour is inevitable. Perhaps this is irritating because I think there is some truth to this. But isn't Whiteness a made-up concept by the White elite? How can our behaviour be tied to something that doesn't really exist? Are we just brainwashed by Whiteness to act in a certain way?
RX9	There is something obscene in this description, like someone's Otherness can be 'sniffed out'. There is something animalistic about how the standards of Whiteness are policed. It feels violent.
RX10	Labelling their loss of authenticity, but this feels blaming and seems to suggest that Rob and Patrick are being insincere by masking their Otherness which is not my intention. Whiteness is imposing on them expressing the parts of themselves that are not fitting with the idea of an 'ideal Whiteness' i.e., heterosexual and alpha male.

Appendix O: Example interview transcript annotation

<p>Primary themes</p> <p>Disturbance of awareness</p> <p>Quelling the disturbance</p> <p>Disturbance of awareness</p> <p>Hyper-awareness</p> <p>Distrust-in self</p> <p>Distrust in relationship</p> <p>Distrust in relationship</p> <p>Distrust in self</p>	<p>197 of shame, a lot of white guilt, um, and I just started to embed myself in</p> <p>198 learning and understanding and, and then my research ultimately. So, it had</p> <p>199 an enormous impact on me. It was life changing because it completely</p> <p>200 turned the way I looked at myself on my head and, um, yeah, I, I, so I</p> <p>201 couldn't, I can never look, even if I'm watching television, I will be watching,</p> <p>202 you know, like Big Narstie show or something like that, and I'll just be</p> <p>203 thinking - Do you feel your struggle? What's your struggle like? How does it</p> <p>204 impact, you know? It's kind of a narrative now in my head. So, that can be,</p> <p>205 that can be a bit of a ball ache because before I was, just as I was in my</p> <p>206 sort of relationships with my friends of colour, I remember like one friend</p> <p>207 being around my house and feeling all of a suddenly very uncomfortable</p> <p>208 beside her, you know, like on the sofa watching telly together and that, that</p> <p>209 was not how I felt before. And, um, just scared that I was going do</p> <p>210 something inadvertently racist. It was, it was really uncomfortable. So, yeah,</p> <p>211 that, um, so it got in the way of my intimacy with people actually, because</p> <p>212 then suddenly there's this, this fear of offense, you know, that I'm part of the</p> <p>213 problem and, um, yeah... So, that was, that's upsetting, really. That was</p> <p>214 upsetting because, um, that, um, that intimacy is something that I really</p> <p>215 value in my relationships. That's something that, uh, this, this road has</p> <p>216 taken me towards, you know, sort of authentic relationships. I've never, I've</p> <p>217 never spoken to any of my black friends about their relationship with racial</p> <p>218 prejudice, it's never come up in our conversations. I don't, I couldn't say</p> <p>219 why. I don't, I don't, I wouldn't say I avoid it, but it doesn't. Maybe quite</p> <p>220 simply, why would a black person talk to a white person about experience of</p> <p>221 racial prejudice? Maybe that, it's as simple as that. But yeah, I, I was just</p> <p>222 wondering now, I was just looking at myself thinking - am I avoiding</p> <p>223 something there? You know? But I don't, don't think so is that I wouldn't be</p> <p>224 now, I mean, like it's the lens, is it? I'm looking at it now, now I wouldn't be</p>	<p>Initial statements</p> <p>Shame, guilt</p> <p>Emotional discomfort - must be responded to/compelled to act.</p> <p>Unconditional acceptance of new paradigm, over-thinking</p> <p>Pre-occupation, assumptions about Other.</p> <p>Re-occupation, over-compensating</p> <p>Inconvenient, uncomfortable</p> <p>Interrupting 'being', risky</p> <p>Discomfort, loss of authenticity</p> <p>Pre-empting operation within racialised paradigm. Distrust, harm.</p> <p>De-humanising self + Other</p> <p>fear, right + wrong ways to behave, harm is invariable</p> <p>Distrust. Loss of intimacy.</p> <p>Loss of authenticity.</p> <p>Contradiction. Avoidance?</p> <p>Expectation of racialised paradigm</p> <p>Assumption about Other.</p> <p>Operating within racialised paradigm, pre-empting.</p> <p>Meta-awareness, self-reflection.</p>
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**Appendix P: Photograph example of the analytical process**



## Appendix Q: Illustrative quotes for themes

Emergent theme	Illustrative quote	Primary theme	Examples of initial phenomenological statements
Bypass	I can speak in ways and get away with it that other people maybe of colour...perhaps, probably can't...act in certain ways within parameters [Rob: 3712-3744]	Access to a separate channel	Privilege – societal freedom, spacious social parameters, free movement, transcending demarcations, permission to evade, comparison to Other, ease
Bypass	I think about my whiteness being like I'm expected to be, to be there. If you, if you know what I mean, I, I sort of nobody questions my right to be anywhere. [Patrick: 5125-5127]	Access to a separate channel	Privilege – societal freedom, spacious social parameters, free movement, transcending demarcations, permission to evade, comparison to Other, ease
Bypass	...there was a hospital there, not a place you ever want to go in...but again, that privilege. I wouldn't go to that hospital. When I got gastroenteritis, we had a private doctor...and he gave me every medicine under the sun...this is their country, lived there all their life, I, I swan in and I have a completely different, um, different experience. [Annabelle: 2298-2309]	Access to a separate channel	Privilege – corporeal, channel, carried, choice, access, priority, transcension, comparison to Other
Bypass	...I just couldn't believe that people had those experiences. So that's how I, you know, that's where I really saw the difference, you know? That I can move	Access to a separate channel	Privilege – freedom, movement, safety, priority, transcension,

	around this world safely and expect to get all of my needs met and be put first in a reasonable manner. [Hannah: 257-260]		comparison to Other, ease
Bypass	...we were in Africa and some, some guy had to walk a hundred miles just to get to the hospital. Um, and he actually worked for a safari camp so they could have flown him up there in seconds, but he wasn't high enough up their, their ranking to warrant being flown. So, yeah. So, in that way we're incredibly lucky we'd get a hospital car if we had no transport. [Angela: 1478-1483]	Access to a separate channel	Privilege – corporeal, speed, priority, luck reducing privilege to luck whilst simultaneously acknowledging the oppression of the Other, transcension, comparison to Other, ease
Bypass	And I think that's what I learned the most, that actually, it's not just about whiteness, it's about being British. Being British has this amazing, it's like a gold card where you can travel anywhere in the world. You know, even if you've qualified in this country, most of your qualifications are accepted in most parts of the world... I lived in XX...an XX passport took you nowhere, you know, like literally it, you, the, the, and again, I was this very young woman with this enormous status and privilege afforded to me because I was white and British and I, I didn't understand that my passport was one of the most powerful bits of paper that people would die to get as as well. [Annabelle: 2265-2277]	Access to a separate channel	Privilege – freedom, movement, transcension, status, hierarch, colonialism, contrast, power, force, dominance, ignorance
Bypass	It's only, it's only a privilege if, you know it's a privilege. So, most people who've got a passport in this country do not understand the privilege of having, you know, this colonial white passport, if you like, even if you are foreigner, that's why foreigners kill themselves trying to come over and get it or will take any risk to try and get it. We don't even know we've got it. [Annabelle: 2279-2284]	Transient awareness	Privilege – transient awareness, obliviousness, ignorance, meta-awareness, obscured vision, suspicion
Bypass	...my ignorance is what I'm really saying about whiteness...the privilege of being ignorant and not even knowing that we're ignorant...if I offer my deepest sort of belief...I don't think, uh, around issues of colour that white people are developed enough, self-aware enough, conscious enough to be part of a real key part of a resolution, and I think that's a problem of whiteness. We don't	Transient awareness	Privilege – transient awareness, obliviousness, ignorance, meta-

	know how white we are and what conveys and how much unconsciously, um, uh, we live happily in our privilege. [Rob: 3709-3711; 4001-4009]		awareness, obscured vision, suspicion
Bypass	...I am most of the time, not aware of that as being privilege, you know, that, that wonderful thing, you know, privilege is thinking something's not a problem, cause it's not a problem for you. [Patrick: 5127-5130]	Transient awareness	Privilege – transient awareness, obliviousness, ignorance, meta-awareness, obscured vision, suspicion
Bypass	(R: And you sound very like, aware of that privilege). Angela: Um, speaking to you. Yes. On a general level, no. On an underlying level, I am. So, I, I don't wake up in the morning, think, gosh, I'm privileged. But, um, so I guess I, as we talk about it yes but in general, no...Because otherwise I'm walking around with an 'I'm privileged' badge and that's even worse...I think to say that you're privileged in has some kind of arrogance attached to it, as opposed to, I'm privileged or I'm lucky to have what I've got. [Angela: 1779-1789]	Transient awareness	Privilege – transient awareness, obliviousness, ignorance, meta-awareness, obscured vision, suspicion
Bypass	...whiteness also means, uh, being able to navigate problems in different ways, which may be, depending on how you look at things, more conducive to an easier life...there's a privilege even in, even in the nasty situations. [Rob: 3747-3751]	A place to hide	Privilege – persistent, ease, choice, options, contrast with the Other
Bypass	My partner calls me 'not quite white'. Yeah? Because he's clearly white... I'm much darker, so he's white...I'm not, not quite white, so that is what I experienced...one of the biggest, one of the most insulting things, well, my doctoral training, one of the teachers, so I was a therapist, I worked as therapist when I did my doctoral training...They thought I was some Reiki spiritual person, which I'm not, you know, yes, I, I have a spirituality, but again, that the, the racism or the judgment was that, you know, "She's all like this, so she can't be..." as a personality, I look a bit messy but actually who I am as a, a person and how I work and as a student is all really very functional and organised and, you know, exact, I've never, never even missed a deadline in 12 years of study, you know?...they had this impression that, oh, I'm, I'm too flimsy to, to, to already, you know, be in the field or even to have that. I don't even know if they thought I should be there as, uh, uh, as well...I was too foreign, so I needed to	A place to hide	Privilege – intersectional identity, failure to meet 'ideal Whiteness', conditional/unstable privilege, belonging vs being Othered

	calm that down, or you're too chatty, you're too...you notice they say "too", "too much", "too much", "too much", or "not enough", "too much", "not enough", "too much", "enough". So that's the whole, um, the whole message going through. I found a lot of, um, it wasn't just about, you know, the, the whiteness, it's about the attitude of white privilege that, that I came across time and time again...[Annabelle: 2786-2814]		
Bypass	I remember when I very first started training, uh, as a counselling psychologist and my first placement, my very first client was a woman who was going through divorce with her husband, who she suspected was gay. And I was like, I was anxious that she thought that I was gay, you know, and that I had to try and hide that from her or, or mask it as much as possible...that kind of surveillance orientation that comes from years of covering it up or worrying about whether it's safe to say or not...Whereas I suppose maybe the same thing is true of whiteness that, that, you know, it's not something I can cover. Um, but it's something that I can maybe feel is...I can feel more or less comfortable to assert or be...[Patrick: 4931-4952]	A place to hide	Privilege – intersectional identity, failure to meet 'ideal Whiteness', persistent privilege, conditional/unstable privilege, ease, ability to hide/mask with/in Whiteness, paradox of comfort vs persecution, ultimatum, surveillance, belonging vs being Othered, cost of authenticity
Bypass	I was in a very, very difficult situation at the university and, um, had I been not able to pass as all these things that tick the boxes of the norms, um, I would've been in a much more difficult situation...I was able to hide, if you like, cover, mask, not present openly parts of myself that I didn't want to, or my history. Someone of colour couldn't, uh, and that really struck me but even in a very difficult situation, I still had a benefit because I could choose...my differences weren't visible to the eye and I was able to use that, had people known of my differences, and when I first started working in the NHS, they'd never have taken me on...there was a way around it, I could choose what and how, If anything, I disclosed...And when I ended up in trouble, I could choose difficulty,	A place to hide	Privilege – intersectional identity, failure to meet 'ideal Whiteness', persistent privilege, conditional/unstable privilege, ease, ability to hide/mask with/in Whiteness, ultimatum, belonging

	<p>because I'd spoken out about some issues. Um, uh, only then did they start to get a sense that there might be something that wasn't physical to them....if I'd been black, it would've been...easier to actually say "this is racism" than whatever it was that went on....I did share in my training group, my story. This, this is, this is the bias, this is the whiteness, um, I shared it in the training group and somebody turned around and said, "Oh, I'm glad you told us after we got to know you because if you told me that at the beginning, it would've been..." and I'll bet if I had not been white, it would've been harder to cover, and if I'd not been white, they would've had a stronger reaction. [Rob: 3906-3950; 4152-4157]</p>		<p>vs being Othered, surveillance, cost of authenticity</p>
Bypass	<p>I haven't really thought too, so much about the privilege that I've had until we're talking now... it constantly sort of dawns more and more on me, actually how much privilege I've had...I always felt kind of really hard done by, a bit of, something of a victim and I'm sort of sitting there thinking actually that doesn't fit. I've had a lot more privilege than I've realised. And then it makes me sort of in the background think, what the heck would it have been like if I hadn't been white or male, or straight... [Rob: 3927-3942]</p>	<p>A place to hide</p>	<p>Privilege – intersectional identity, failure to meet 'ideal Whiteness', persistent privilege, conditional/unstable privilege, ease, ability to hide/mask with/in Whiteness, ultimatum, belonging vs being Othered, surveillance, cost of authenticity</p>
Vessel	<p>...my whiteness becomes a salient feature by its difference, but in the context of an all-white kind of thing, it becomes something that you just don't think about. Um, so I suppose it's, I'm not aware of my whiteness until there is something that's not white in a way....I don't know how to, um, demonstrate whiteness. I don't know really. It's a, and it's so, so curious that such a, a significant part of my identity and one which I know gives me a greater deal of privilege is not something that I can pin down to anything...I could talk about my whiteness by, with reference to all the other things that whiteness gives me,</p>	<p>Empty by default</p>	<p>Essentially empty, noticed in contrast with difference, context dependent</p>

	right, but it, but in its essence, it, it is sort of feels opaque or difficult. [Patrick: 4822-4826; 5347-5361]		
Vessel	...in order to notice something, you've got to compare it to something else. So, if you're in a community of all white people, you won't be comparing it to someone else. Um, so it's got to be somewhere where I've noticed that I'm different to that person or that person is different to me by skin colour. And I don't think it was anything before...[Tasmin: 1327-1331]	Empty by default	Essentially empty, noticed in contrast with difference, context dependent
Vessel	...I think those, those have particular times when I noticed my whiteness compared to... yeah, in my case, it was, it was with blackness. [Hannah: 112-114]	The disturbance of awareness	Essentially empty, noticed in contrast with difference, context dependent
Vessel	...noticing those, those contrasts...it was redness on my hands that was bothering me, and I remember saying to her like, "How would you know if you had poor circulation by looking at yourself?" And she just turned her hands over, and of course they're white, you know? And, um, that was, that was like a really sort of stark moment of we're not so different, you know? [Hannah: 99-110]	The disturbance of awareness	Imbued with meaning – corporeal, alienating Other, fascination with body of Other, Whiteness is norm, reduced view of Other, 'racial' paradigm, difference constructed arbitrarily
Vessel	So, when I got on the bus, 99% of the people were white and when I got to XX 99%, well, were different, brown skin, probably black skin. I just thought "Wow, I've travelled to somewhere completely different in the world, this is really amazing"...I just thought, well, this is really strange. A bus ride can get you from England to Africa in 20 minutes. [Angela: 1971-1978]	The disturbance of awareness	Imbued with meaning – corporeal, alienating Other, fascination with body of Other, Whiteness is norm, reduced view of Other, 'racial' paradigm, difference constructed arbitrarily
Vessel	...sometimes it's being like...(sighs) you're odd, so we want to see what you're like... one of my children was really blonde and, and uh, um, blue eyed and the XX used to think it fascinating and come and touch his hair for good luck. Um,	The disturbance	Imbued with meaning – corporeal, becoming the Other,

	and I guess that it could be a bit annoying at times (laughs), but also understanding that...We were very accepted in in, in the community...but clearly there was a difference [Tasmin: 817-825]	of awareness	novel experience of not being the norm, Whiteness brought into awareness, annoyance, unusual, disturbing
Vessel	I was the only white person in the village. Um, and I can see myself and sort of, at first it was sort of interesting that people looking a lot noticing, uh, and like curious and I quite liked it...and then it became annoying...because it was like nonstop...staring, looking. Um, and in the end it just really pissed me off. And I couldn't wait to find the quickest way out or like, avoid people or hide behind a tree or something...I was just so sick of it, but it made me think about...what it must be like, um, to be other than the norm, other than whiteness. [Rob: 3339-3351]	The disturbance of awareness	Imbued with meaning – corporeal, becoming the Other, novel experience of not being the norm, Whiteness brought into awareness, annoyance, unusual, disturbing, questioning
Vessel	...it was literally like a herd of elephants walking down XX high street. People were...literally...slack jawed in amazement...Every two or three minutes, we were stopped for a selfie by people...like, it was the most exotic thing. It was like somebody from Papaya New Guinea arriving with full feathered headdress and walking down the aisles of, of Tesco...I mean, it was just our whiteness... It was just very, it was funny. [Patrick: 5160-5184]	The disturbance of awareness	Imbued with meaning – corporeal, becoming the Other, novel experience of not being the norm, Whiteness brought into awareness, annoyance, unusual, disturbing, questioning
Vessel	...I've been aware of my whiteness in kind of feeling a bit frightened at different times where I've again, been the only white person there...And I felt very, like, not part of that group...it very much activated a lot of my kind of childhood stuff, about large groups of black people. Um, it was, I was not threatened, nobody was threatening, but it was like, this is not, these are not my people and this is not my place...They didn't see me go back into my room. Um, because I was	The disturbance of awareness	Imbued with meaning – corporeal, becoming the Other, novel experience of not being the norm, Whiteness brought



	ashamed of like, not wanting to be there...that was less humorous kind of put a more sense of like, wow, no, I can't be here. (R: Mm-hmm) Because I don't fit in and I don't feel comfortable. [Patrick: 5193-5221]		into awareness, annoyance, unusual, disturbing, questioning
Vessel	...I felt very ashamed of my whiteness, um, of my privilege. I felt guilty. I started to positively discriminate, I think. Sometimes I think I have to be careful to do that, not to do that today. So, um, I will just walk past other white people in the street that I don't know particularly, you know, but make a, make a point of, you know, smiling, saying hello, you know, contacting people of colour more so, things like that...It was obvious why I was doing that, because I, I, I, had this, this notion that black people weren't as accepted in my society and didn't feel as comfortable and as, um, able to take up space, have resources, you know, feel safe, that bothered me, that bothered me deeply, and I wanted to work extremely hard to change that, you know? And, but I was obviously using, I don't know, arguably unhelpful methods to do that, and you then have to wonder, was that for me? Was that for them? You know, like who, who was that to appease? You know? What would the benefits of that actually have been? "Oh wow, a white person's smiled at me!" And then I would have incidences where I'd be rejected, um, by, uh, people of colour and, um, not responded to, and I remember just thinking - I wouldn't like white people either if I was, you know? And, um, yeah, sort of coming to, to recognise that that smiley white people aren't going sort this out. You know, it's not the solution. [Hannah: 173-191]	Quelling the disturbance	Imbided with meaning – privilege, emotional discomfort, shame, guilt, need to resolve discomfort, need to give and take something from/to the other, assumptions about the Other, intolerable ambivalence, relating 'racially', agitated, disturbance, intolerable
Vessel	...when you go to a Safari camp, there are people who...clean your room for you. And sometimes it feels worse than if I went to a hotel in England and stayed and the chambermaid came and cleaned the room...So, you just, you just chat to them and you're just polite and you have a bit of a giggle and then it's okay. So, I always find that what their names are, for example, and we chat and I speak as much XX as I can. (R: What do you think...that's important for you to communicate...in those sorts of exchanges?) Angela: Respect, I think...just because one's got white skin and one, one of us has got black skin,	Quelling the disturbance	Imbided with meaning – privilege, emotional discomfort, shame, guilt, need to resolve discomfort, need to give and take something from/to the other, assumptions

	we're the same we're people who would like, respect and warmth and kindness. [Angela: 1677-1691]		about the Other, minimising difference
Trap	I think whiteness is actually being, um, attacked at times...we have to be so careful about what is said. So, it actually stops one being one's self...you're not defining a person, you're defining a concept...if you're going to have something that is, um, only in two dimension there are two aspects and you're setting up a right and wrong, you're not using the middle bits, the grey areas...race and, um, ethnicity, they're all social constructs in order for us to categorise ourselves...we were all big one, big family. [Tasmin: 1287-1314]	Hyper-awareness of the self in relation to the Other	Dilution of self-expression, contrast, trapped, over-thinking, self-dilution, trepidation, ambiguity, risk, perceived by Other, paranoia
Trap	...it was to avoid getting, saying anything controversial...in case...an answer, could be seen... Oh, I was having this discussion. I had, um, lunch with my team of, of counsellors that I worked with and, um, one said green wellies and then everyone said well that's more about class. And then someone said, well that's inferring other people with black skins don't have green wellies. And then it became like, Oh God, this is too difficult, and someone said, "Just say factor 50" and I thought okay, do that. (R: Mm-hmm). So, it seemed an easy thing because you, you, um... so much be read into what's you think is an, um, what's the word...an uncontroversial answer and other people might read something into it that you had no idea was there (R: Mm-hmm, and is there, is there a concern even in as you went, as you answer these interview questions here, that you might say something controversial? Is that a concern at all?) Angela: Um, um, I've thought about that too and I thought, I hope not because there's, um, because I don't feel a difference in any way. So, I don't feel it. So, I haven't really come across as something I said, but if it did, that would be quite uncomfortable. (R: Mm-hmm, mmhmm. Would you say a bit more about that? Why would it be uncomfortable?) Angela: I guess I thought, well one of the things I thought was just having a, um, my mother had a painting, small painting of my house made for me...because it's so important, I just love it...but if I show that, that's going to be what, look what I've got that somebody else hasn't got...[Angela: 1726-1752]	Hyper-awareness of the self in relation to the Other	Dilution of self-expression, expression, contrast, trapped, over-thinking, self-dilution, trepidation, ambiguity, risk, unutterable, abstract thinking, hypothesisng, preoccupation, perceived by Other, ambiguous, nebulous, anxiety, paranoia, intolerable

<p>Trap</p>	<p>...this interview is making me aware of my whiteness or, or asking me to invite me, to reflect on it and be much more of aware of it in a way that I might, 99% of the time, not even think about. (R: Mm-hmm) It's kind of curious. It's a little bit, um, awkward, I feel a little bit, um, de-skilled...I sort of feel like I'm being given a, a task. I'm not quite sure if I'm going to be any good at...thinking about being made aware of my whiteness, the first thing that came to mind when you said that was it, my racism being pointed out (R: Mm-hmm) So, then my, my, my mind went straight to shame. So, it's like you, white people are just not aware of how offensive that is or something, you know, that kind of point being made. Like you don't, you are speaking from your, from a position of your whiteness and you're completely unaware of that. And it's like, it's not okay. And then, you think oh God!...versus someone pointing out my whiteness in a, I was about to say someone pointing out my whiteness in a positive way, and then thinking...I don't know how that could ever happen. It's like, how would my whiteness ever be pointed out in a positive way, except by some kind of white supremacist?...but where is positive whiteness? (R: Mm, mm-hmm) and I suppose positive whiteness might be in dismantling one's own privilege...But it doesn't seem to be anything about the celebration of whiteness that for me, feels anything different from flying a St George's flying out the window when England are playing rugby or, or football or something. (R: Mm-hmm) which just, just feels hideous to me. [Patrick: 5301-5329]</p>	<p>Distrust</p>	<p>Distrust, trepidation, ambiguity, risk, unutterable, abstract thinking, hypothesisng, preoccupation, perceived by Other, ambiguous, shame, anxiety, paranoia, intolerable</p>
<p>Trap</p>	<p>It's kind of a narrative now in my head...before I was, just as I was in my sort of relationships with my friends of colour, I remember like one friend being around my house and feeling all of a suddenly very uncomfortable beside her, you know, like on the sofa watching telly together and that, that was not how I felt before. And, um, just scared that I was going do something inadvertently racist...so it got in the way of my intimacy with people actually, because then suddenly there's this, this fear of offense, you know, that I'm part of the problem...That was upsetting because, um, that, um, that intimacy is something that I really value in my relationships... I've never spoken to any of my black friends about their relationship with racial prejudice, it's never come up in our conversations. I don't, I couldn't say why. I don't, I don't, I wouldn't</p>	<p>Distrust</p>	<p>Distrust of self and Other, right and wrong ways to behave, anxiety, ambiguous, dangerous, risky, inevitability of harm, loss of authenticity, over-thinking, pre-empting, limited</p>

	say I avoid it, but it doesn't. Maybe quite simply, why would a black person talk to a white person about experience of racial prejudice? ... now I wouldn't be uncomfortable having those conversations, but, um, back then I think I would of, I would've been frightened, really frightened, that I would, um, yeah, offend people in some way with this sort of newfound awareness of all my privilege. So, yeah, a lot of overcompensating in strange ways. [Hannah: 199-224]		relating, loss of intimacy
Trap	...in therapeutic work or in any, any kind of interaction with somebody who is not white, that I'm sensitive to that difference and to, to what kind of, what might come up in terms of getting things wrong...most of my practice is with trans people, and I know that the, that's like the most common thing that people say when they think about, you know, okay, I'm going to work with a trans person and I just don't want to use the wrong pronouns, or I don't want to get, I don't want to offend them, you know, I kind of feel that, that sensitivity (R: Mmhmm) Um, and I would feel it particularly with somebody from a black XX, from that, because I'm then foregrounded, my, my kind of like colonialist self is sort of there and, and kind of potentially, well it's shameful as well as potentially damaging, you know, all sort of hurtful [Patrick: 4829-4840]	Distrust	Distrust, racialised paradigm, 'racial' divide, loss of humanity, limited relating, right and wrong ways to behave, uncertainty, persistent risk of harm
Trap	I still (sighs) don't get the whiteness. I'm, I'm struggling a little bit with it because I know I'm white, but I, I, I don't, I, I know how the... I just see, I just see people... and, and my mother was like that though...she just loved different people, she loved to understand. So, perhaps there's also a familial, um, tone, uh, undertone to it...Tolerance, uh, curiosity, liking to know. She loved to know all about other, um, religions and cultures and experience that. So yeah, openness... I, I, I find, do find it difficult when everything is, sorry, excuse the pun (laughs) black or white dichotomous because it divides rather than integrates... you're missing out on an awful lot of similarities as well as differences, but there are so many different similarities... recently, I have seemed to have got a lot of people who from different ethnic backgrounds and different cultures and just, I just love learning about how they see it. So, I think it is that openness. [Tasmin: 850-884]	Rejection of difference	Rejection of Whiteness, paradox of acknowledging and rejecting racialisation, bound to Whiteness through avoidance of it
Trap	...there was stuff that maybe I didn't really go anywhere near for fear of it sounding racist...if we'd kind of gone further, I would've had to have worked	Stuckness	Ambiguity, anxiety, distrust, right and

	<p>through my own kind of anxiety around racist trope...the expectations of the immigrant parents and, and, and so on. Um, and that might have been something that I would have been much more aware of the need to sensitively manage as a white person, talking to, um, a person of kind of South Asian background. (R: What do you think the concern was there?) Patrick: From my side that I would come across as racist, that I would come up as kind of buying into a stereotype...So, I'm sure that if I had have raised it, I don't know how I would've done it, but I would've probably had massive kind of caveats. I mean, I do it very much with my clients, trans clients. I said, look, I'm aware, I'm a cis man (R: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm) I, I have a lot of experience of working with trans people, but I'm not trans myself and so, there's a limit, there's a kind of a point at which this is not my lived experience. Um, and I suppose if that might have been part of what I would've talked about with her...but, um, I would've been aware of my own fear of being racist or appearing racist or saying something inappropriate...like, what language do I use to describe my client? You know, she, is she an Asian client, is she South Asian? Is she a person of South Asian background? You know, it's like, is that a black person or is that an Afro Afro Afro African American? [Patrick: 5237-5282]</p>		<p>wrong ways to speak and behave, stuck, filtered speech, prescribed yet ambiguous linguistic framework, uncertainty, fear, lack of available language, risky, unutterable</p>
<p>Trap</p>	<p>...it feels like I, um, part of the problem in that, in that debate, not personally, but objectively, I am. I'm part of the, the white mass that won't give over their resources and continue to, um, continue to, um, take all the privilege, you know? Take up all the space and take that for granted. And, um, that makes me sad, that really makes me sad, but it also makes me hypervigilant for racial prejudice. I think really hypervigilant because, um, I want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem...it's a position, I've always felt challenged to present any training, because of being a white...working to middle-class woman, hetero woman, you know, with all of this great range of privilege standing up there talking about racism, you know? I just haven't felt that I've had, you know? I haven't felt confident enough to do that, and that I wouldn't be met with, um, you know, some kind of, um, maybe hostility, but certainly sort of a querying or a questioning as to how I felt I was positioned to do that. Was</p>	<p>Stuckness</p>	<p>Ambiguity, anxiety, distrust, right and wrong ways to speak and behave, stuck, filtered speech, prescribed yet ambiguous linguistic framework, uncertainty, fear, lack of available language, risky, perceived by Other, distrust of other</p>

	I not just merely representing the white privilege again? How I can even talk about their experience, you know? [Hannah: 389-406]		
Conditional home	...Whiteness, if, if it was, it would be someone like Rachmaninoff's piano concerto, because it's so...it's that sense of...Rachmaninoff wasn't, wasn't British (laughs), he might, I don't know, he, he's probably white but...for me, it encompasses a whole sense of passion and, um, crescendo and softness...I wouldn't necessarily go for, uh, reggae. I like reggae, but it wouldn't do anything to calm me...it's colourful and you can get that sense of colour, but it's that sort of strongness...a sort of sense of achievement, I guess, and depth and solidness, but calm...Like being at home, feeling at home, feeling comfortable...I'm actually now trying to compare it to some sort of Caribbean type music. And I guess that would be the same sense someone from the Caribbean would have of, feels like that represents our, uh, our culture, our way of being, um, like, uh, the, when we dance in Diwali with the Gurkhas, it has a different kind of rhythm... but I don't feel as I can just go "Oh, it's Rachmaninoff" (sighs) (drops shoulders) (laughs), or, "oh, it's a lovely piece of..." almost north, northern European, is, is the sense is of that. So, it must represent the sense of being in the right place for you at that time. [Tasmin: 1062-1089]	Finding a home inside sameness	Unsure how to occupy/inhabit Whiteness, ambiguous and meaningless as a standalone construct, negative connotations, separate/distance, imposed on identity, emphasizing individualism, sameness vs difference, unutterable, conceptualising Whiteness as a geographical location, contrast with Other, inhabiting by Othering, fixed and specific categories of belonging/not belonging, narrow range to operate within, operating within a racialised paradigm, limited relating, narrow view of self/Other,

			arbitrary delineation of self/Other
Conditional home	I love Radio Four...I love The Archers, so that feeling British...so much interesting and so much like home... It's something about it being very, maybe English rather than British... I don't know how many people in Africa and Asia listen to Radio Four right now, but I wouldn't imagine that many. [Angela: 1704-1722]	Finding a home inside sameness	<p>           Unsure how to occupy/inhabit Whiteness, ambiguous and meaningless as a standalone construct, negative connotations, separate/distance, imposed on identity, emphasizing individualism, sameness vs difference, unutterable, conceptualising Whiteness as a geographical location, contrast with Other, inhabiting by Othering, fixed and specific categories of belonging/not belonging, narrow range to operate within, operating within a racialised paradigm, limited relating, narrow view of self/Other,         </p>

			arbitrary delineation of self/Other
Conditional home	It's a taboo topic in my family....there is a sense of otherness, white that's non-white...or at least non, non-the norm. The, the, the doesn't fit well into the hierarchy...it's always been hidden, hidden conversation...a sense of this hiddenness and a wrongness and a bias and society frowning...[Rob: 3354-3370]	Not belonging in Whiteness	Not fitting in/belonging, perceived, hierarchy, experience of being Othered, Whiteness is exclusive, rejection, superficial/conditional home
Conditional home	...I think what intersects onto that, so my own experience of growing up gay in XX and in a very, um, homophobic, macho...a very patriarchal form of white maleness...I feel very oppressed by that idea of Whiteness. Um, so I rejected on all sorts of different levels from a sexuality dimension, but also from a, um, a kind of racist white supremacist position...I just think that's not something that I want to be associated with...you know, how do you, how do you occupy that with pride?... So, I suppose I know that I'm white, um, I'm ashamed of my connection with XX whiteness. (R: Mm-hmm) It's something that I think I should, I wouldn't want to be proud of. I have absolutely no desire to connect with, uh, other white people from that cultural background. So, whiteness in that cultural context means... is synonymous with all of those (R: Mm-hmm) things that I find disgusting now as a, as an idea, but personally oppressive in terms of my, my sort of identity and I was the, the person that was kind of bullied and spat on (R: Mm-hmm) as a, as a white person who didn't conform to whiteness in that cultural stereotype, which is very much actually about white male, male...yeah, white maleness...[Patrick: 4527-4608]	Not belonging in Whiteness	Not fitting in/belonging, perceived, hierarchy, experience of being Othered, Whiteness is exclusive, rejection, superficial/conditional home
Conditional home	I was a foreign kid and my experience of that started at school where none of my teachers ever pronounced my name properly. Um, so I never considered, I wouldn't have thought of myself as white because I was always the, the foreign kid...all these things I've sort of noticed from, from very early on that gosh, I'm a bit louder, I'm a bit, ugh, my foods all this, or even I would wear more colours	Not belonging in Whiteness	Not fitting in/belonging, perceived, hierarchy, experience of being Othered, Whiteness



	in clothes and stuff. There was nothing, you know, conservative about it because that fitted what I knew to be home, um, as well. [Annabelle: 2174-2177]		is exclusive, rejection, superficial/conditional home
Conditional home	...I didn't fit in at all and was not kind of welcomed...by the kind of white, British people...(R: Mm-hmm) Um, and generally all of my friends were foreigners...we were all basically the outcasts because we were not British. (R: Mm-hmm) You know, we think about that kind of idea of like, okay, so you are white there, so you must kind of connect with white people...which is not the case. (R: Mm-hmm) At least for me and I think that had a lot to do with me being gay, had a lot to do with me not being particularly sporty. It was quite a blokey, sporty school and I didn't fit in to that extent... I think it did have a lasting legacy in terms of, uh, how anxious I feel about being white, um, and not offending people who are not, but also that I didn't really fit in...You know, it was not like I came home to my people (R: Mm-hmm) It was not that at all...you didn't really belong there, you didn't really belong here either. And I certainly have that experience, certainly that is still with me. And that's the legacy, I suppose. [Patrick: 4703-4733]	Not belonging in Whiteness	Not fitting in/belonging, perceived, hierarchy, experience of being Othered, Whiteness is exclusive, oppressed by, Whiteness synonymous with masculinity, rejection, superficial/conditional home
Conditional home	So, this was my own family, you know, we were experiencing, we weren't white enough for them and we weren't foreign enough for them. And, and so from a very young child, I belonged nowhere, you know? There were, there was no case to to to belong, uh, at all which is also really strange and also because people often think about racism and stuff as a black and white issue. It's not, it's, there, it's so there, it, it has so many shades, you know, to it. And we, as I said, what we're talking about is power, one aspect, feeling that they are better than, than than the other. And I think, you know, when you're a sort 10, 11-year-old kid, you know, or, or you, you don't fucking care, you just, you just don't understand why your family can't get on or that you're not lovable. So that was the, the message from that was that I, I wasn't, that there was something wrong, there's something wrong with me. That you're like a bit of a mutt, a half-breed, a nowhere if you like, had a huge impact, I think. And I think that the, the, the irony is I think I based the rest of my life, especially after living in other	Finding a home inside difference	Embracing Otherness, embracing not belonging, finding a home in difference, finding meaning in helping others

	<p>countries on being exactly that. I quite like the fact that I don't want to, I don't want to be particularly white or particularly, you know, so I'm just going to be a citizen of the world and try to balance that power where, where wherever I go, because I would hate someone to have those, those same experiences as well. [Annabelle: 2763-2782]</p>		
Conditional home	<p>...I used to think of was a massive sort of disadvantage, I now think about, I think it's the, the best thing ever happened was, is in terms of being gay. Cause I just think if I was straight can you imagine the insufferable prick I could end up being, you know, like there's something about like hauling some kind of stigmatised identity that, that I think is, you know, although I've certainly found kind of difficult, but clearly is maybe the reason I'm in counselling psychology and because within maleness, or I guess I would say within white maleness, I fail to achieve the standards, the proper standards of white maleness...[Patrick: 5093-5101]</p>	Finding a home inside difference	Embracing Otherness, relief from Whiteness, finding a home in difference
Conditional home	<p>...everybody said something about their history, their past, and I mentioned this XX stuff and the name of the XX group. And actually, he corrected me and said, it's not pronounced like that, it's pronounced like this. And I was like, do you see what I mean? Like I'm so out of touch with my own history, um, I don't even know. It takes a black guy who's not even come from a XX background to tell me how to pronounce the word of the group that I come from. Um, and I got in that moment a profound sense of how envious I was. That actually these people come from a tight knit group, although it's through adversity, at least in the western world...And so, I feel like, what does it mean? It means I get gains in terms of privilege, status, job opportunities but I feel like I've lost in terms of community, unity and identity. I don't have an identity, I'm still searching for it Um, very sad..I envy as well as have privilege. So, I'm torn. Yeah. Torn. That searching, working in a group I can never belong to... So, I'm careful of activists, that maybe we take something from the people we seek to serve, particularly around issues of race and colour...Do we actually take from you and still get something from you? Uh, through our whiteness, still being superior in some way....So, of course this is the activist in me, you know, if it's not colour, it's climate change, if it's not climate change its gender variance, you</p>	Finding a home inside difference	Disconnected, searching for a place to belong, trying to find a home in difference, loss of identity

	know, looking for a home or something....but it does still feel like I'm playing something of a sort of privileged white man's game. Uh, trying to belong. Uh, and it's very uncomfortable. Um, yeah, that bits troubling...[Rob: 3636-3677; 3810-3812; 4002-4004]		
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