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South African volunteer perceptions : an exploratory study into the perceptions of female white South African volunteers working with black children orphaned by AIDS.

Nichas, Tracey

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Abstract

This study explored the perceptions often White female South African volunteers working with black children diagnosed HIV positive and/or orphaned by AIDS. A qualitative research strategy was used in order to explore the participants' perceptions of the role that racial dynamics and everyday racism play in their work as volunteers. Ten participants over the age of 18 years, that have been volunteering for a minimum of one month and that volunteer for a minimum of one hour a week at an organisation in Johannesburg, were interviewed. The data were transcribed and analysed using thematic content analysis and the findings were interpreted using a framework drawn from critical racetheory and critical Whiteness studies. Notions of everyday racism were evidenced in the findings of the study. These findings challenge traditional notions in a novel way by expanding the current understanding of the racial dynamics at play in a country working towards equality. In doing so, the study raises theoretical and practical implications for efforts aimed to address racism in South Africa.

Keywords: AIDS, racism, South Africa, otherness, volunteerism, critical racetheory