

Study Abstracts – An Invitation

We continue with our series of abstracts of research carried out in Australia in this Quarterly. The series was given a rest in Quarterly 3, Number 2, due to the report of the 1st International Research Colloquium in Dance/Movement Therapy, in February 2004, in Hanover, Germany. From this event we printed all the abstracts from the Colloquium Brochure edited by Iris Bräuninger & Sabine Koch. In this edition the study completed by Sue Mullane to fulfill the requirements for Master of Education at the University of Melbourne is presented.

An Inquiry into the Lived Experience of Women in a Group Dance Therapy Program

This research illuminates the lived experience of five women survivors of sexual assault within a group dance therapy program. The setting of the study is an adult therapy program offered to women survivors at the South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault, East Bentleigh, Victoria. Five women, aged in their twenties and all survivors of child sexual assault, agreed to participate in the inquiry. Following a phenomenological-hermeneutic methodology, the study seeks to elucidate meanings attributed by the women to their experiences. The inquiry draws on multi-modal sources of verbal and nonverbal evidence, including audio recordings of session conversations; client journals; one-page summaries written by the women at the conclusion of each session; video recordings; and specific movement observations. In keeping with a phenomenological perspective, analysis incorporates systematic step by step reduction, integration and synthesis of data, all the time remaining true to the women's wording of their experiences.

Findings of the study are presented, firstly as a grand narrative that recreates the program, then as a thematic summary of women's experiences. Thematic categories of description include body awareness; memories and associations; transformation; freedom; and group relationship. These findings are discussed in relation to existing literature on sexual assault. Implications for practitioners working with survivors of sexual assault are noted along with recommendations for further research. The thesis closes with the researcher-practitioner's inter-subjective poetic depictions of the five women participants as a lasting reminder of their experiences.

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Copy of thesis available at the ERC Library, University of Melbourne.

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