Giorgio Morandi
Still life, 1947
oil on canvas
36 x 45cm
Art Gallery of New South Wales
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Crafting Practice in Trauma Therapy

A dialogical and relational engagement with ethics and poetic, sacred, spiritual and unnamed moments in therapeutic relationships.

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I dedicate this thesis to my mother Norma Lesley who left school at fifteen to run her mother’s florist business. Her bright intellect and wondrous laugh are fondly recalled. She was like so many women of her generation, before her time.
Abstract

This study utilised narrative inquiry to explore trauma therapists’ engagement with poetic, sacred, spiritual and unnamed moments in therapy. The research focuses on therapists, their therapeutic relationships and the ways they make their therapy practice and their practice ethics through the making and doing of their therapy. The thesis presents a poetic conceptual frame for the analysis of therapist’s experiences of making (poiēsis) and the generative discoveries produced within their therapeutic relationships.

Interviews were designed as dialogical and relational conversations with colleagues. The study explored: therapist’s practices in violence and abuse contexts and poetic, sacred, spiritual and unnamed moments in therapy; whether therapists deliberately include practices to evoke unnamed moments in therapy, and how do therapists make sense of and interpret their experience with vicarious traumatisation. Using Polkinghorne (1995), the analysis produced three configured plots related to: resonance and transformation in the therapeutic relationship; therapy as threshold experience: narratives of self-discovery, practice and identity; and a relational and dialogical engagement with vicarious traumatisation: therapists and their practices.

This study has been intimately concerned with the making and doing of therapy practice and identified three practice components from the findings of the research, they are: In the making and doing of authentic therapy practices transformation occurs for both therapist and client and this leads to the emergence of unnamed moments in therapeutic relationships; unnamed moments offer therapist’s threshold experiences of self-discovery related to their sense of self, identity and their therapy practices; and therapists’ engagement with their ethical commitments and therapy practices are an integral part of the way they account for and live out their relationship to vicarious traumatisation.
Publications arising from this research to date


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