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Involving Family Members of People with Dementia in the Music
Therapy Process at a Residential Care Facility

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

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ABSTRACT

The therapeutic use of music with older adults with dementia is widely documented, and family involvement is encouraged in both music therapy practice and dementia care services. This qualitative study explores and describes the experience of a student music therapist involving the family members of people with dementia in the music therapy process in a residential care facility. Grounded theory methodology informed analysis of the data sources. Secondary data was analysed and a theoretical perspective regarding family involvement in the music therapy process in this setting was developed. The findings are presented in main categories consisting of: building relationships, sharing information, unplanned family involvement in music therapy sessions, flexibility, spontaneity, joy and humour, and negotiation of the music therapist role in the community of the facility. The emergent theoretical perspective suggests that involving family members in the music therapy process in residential care facility is valuable in fostering and strengthening a sense of community between residents, family members and care staff.

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Contents

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Dementia.....	2
The Residents and the Residential Care Facility.....	2
Family.....	4
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
Music Therapy and Dementia.....	5
Families and Dementia.....	6
Music Therapy and Families.....	8
PERSONAL POSITION.....	12
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS.....	15
Data Collection.....	16
Data Analysis.....	16
Ethical Standards and Considerations.....	17
CLINICAL PRACTICE.....	19
FINDINGS.....	23
VIGNETTE.....	23
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	27
1. <i>Building Relationships</i>	27
2. <i>Sharing Information</i>	30
3. <i>Unplanned family involvement in music therapy sessions</i>	34
4. <i>Spontaneity, Joy and Humour</i>	36
5. <i>Flexibility</i>	39
6. <i>Negotiating my role in the community of the facility.</i>	41
DISCUSSION.....	43
Strengths and Limitations.....	49
Conclusion.....	50
REFERENCES.....	52
APPENDIX I: <i>Letter to Families</i>	61
APPENDIX II: <i>Information Sheet for Consent</i>	62

APPENDIX III: *Consent Form*.....64