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**Interaction within the Therapeutic Relationship: Exploring the Relationship between
the Music Therapy Practices of a Music Therapy Student and the Concepts Used in
Intensive Interaction**

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

Master of Music Therapy

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Abstract

This research project explores the relationship between the music therapy practices of a music therapy student and intensive interaction, a teaching model of communication used with children, young people and adults who experience challenges with learning and relating to others.

Secondary analysis of clinical records (session notes and video footage) was used in this theoretical research, using both inductive and deductive methods of micro-analysis to explore the relationship between the two approaches. Themes included two relatively distinct forms of interactive communication – communication which predominantly used music and communication which used other modes. These two groups were then divided into further themes including: elements of music and improvisational musical techniques; visual cues; vocal activity; gestures and body language; movement activity and time/space. These themes were then correlated and compared with the corresponding features and descriptions of improvisational music therapy and intensive interaction.

The findings suggest there is a relationship between the concepts used intensive interaction and the improvisational music therapy practices of the music therapy student; they both share features of the naturalistic processes of ‘infant-caregiver interactions’ within the elements of music, with both parties fine-tuning to one another’s rhythmic, melodic, textural and temporal nuances. However, improvisational or creative music therapy combines more complex usage of the elements of music including musical form, structure and texture to provide an interpersonal experience through a therapeutic relationship. That relationship is reliant on the music therapist’s sophisticated skills to combine emotion and music within the improvisational process. The strengths and limitations of the study are stated along with implications for training and further research in the field of music therapy and special education.

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Ethical Statement

The Massey University Human Ethics Committee gave ethical approval for this project.

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