

English summary

This thesis is a qualitative retrospective case study of active music therapy with a woman with delayed grief. The object is to examine how improvisation in individual music therapy can help resolve delayed grief and thereby initiate further grief work.

The thesis is in five chapters:

First chapter is an introduction, where I present my motivation for writing the thesis, the purpose of the study (as described above) and my previous knowledge (epoché). My therapeutic approach is based in Analytical Music Therapy, and I see music as a referential phenomena. I also present the methodology of the study which is phenomenological, because I'm interested in understanding the interactive psychological processes in the phenomena improvisation.

The second chapter in two parts provides first a theoretical foundation of grief and grief work. I present a meta-theory (Bugge et al., 2001) which describes grief as complex and multidimensional processes influencing physical, emotional, cognitive, existential and social conditions. As an example of grief work I present 'the Dual Process of Coping with Bereavement' (Stroebe and Shut, 2008, 2011). After this I describe complicated grief reactions, such as delayed grief, and how professional help can be needed in order to guide the client to a normal coping process. The second part of the theoretical section presents examples of music therapy in grief work as an illustration of a professional intervention that can help release hidden and repressed emotions related to delayed grief (Smeijsters, 1999; Bright, 2002). Improvisation as an intervention in music therapy is described as a creative medium in which it is possible for the client to project hidden emotions and 'sound the self' because of analogy between musical and psychological processes (Smeijsters, 2005).

Third chapter of the thesis is an empirical part beginning by a presentation of the case followed by an analysis. The client is a 60 year old woman who recently has experienced many different losses, the biggest one being the sudden loss of her husband. To protect herself (as a defence mechanism) from overwhelming emotions she keeps herself busy in her daily life, not allowing herself to be in contact with her emotions related to the loss. Consequently her grief and grief reactions are delayed. After eight sessions of music therapy she finds herself to be more calm and more in contact with her grief. She is beginning to accept the loss and the fact that she is now alone.

The data of the study is video recordings and two video clips with improvisations from music therapy sessions are selected and illustrated visually in two graphic notations. Criteria for the selected improvisations were a) that I wondered why the client reacted as she did and b) I thought the given improvisation had a positive influence on the therapeutic process. This is followed by a phenomenological inspired hermeneutic analysis of improvised music in seven steps (Arnason,

2002). The analysis combines structural music analysis with analysis of the referential meaning of music and the context of the client. The product is two 'improvisation narratives' giving an artistic response to the raw data in order to capture the dynamic character of the improvisations. The 'improvisation narratives' are hereafter interpreted in the light of the theory of analogy, which leads to six findings concerning for example the client's unconscious expression in music.

In the fourth chapter I discuss my findings with the presented theory in order to answer my problem statement, and I reflect on the clinical applicability of the study and how improvisation can be used in 'the Dual Process Model' as a means to help a client get in touch with her delayed grief. I reflect on a new way of using the model in clinical work by adding an oscillation process between everyday life experiences and loss oriented processes as a way to regulate confrontation with difficult and suppressed grief emotions. Finally I evaluate and discuss the quality of my study, which is limited by high subjectivity and lack of validation but strengthened by theoretical recognisability.

In the final and fifth chapter I conclude that improvisation used in a trustful therapeutic alliance in individual music therapy can resolve delayed grief because of the analogy between musical and psychological processes. This analogy allows the client to project unconscious parts of her personality into the music and thereby make contact to suppressed emotions in a safe musical space. The following verbal reflections make the unconscious material conscious and thereby initiate further grief work. Therapeutic reflections present thoughts on the use of chaos versus control in the music as an important contribution to the client's feeling of emotional empowerment. Further research is suggested in order to validate the study and regarding the use of improvisation in the restoration oriented part of 'the Dual Process Model'.