

ALARA World Congress  
Melbourne, September 2010

Using Co-operative inquiry and Participatory action research with therapists in the Victorian sexual assault field to better deliver services to families who have experienced Sibling sexual abuse.

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### Acknowledgements

- A/P Amaryll Perlesz, La Trobe University (principal supervisor)
- Anne Welfare, La Trobe University (supervisor)
- John, Jaclyn, Michael, Pauline, Vicki (co-researchers)
- Karen Hogan, The Gatehouse Centre
- CEASE

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### What lies beneath this research?

- Worked in the child sexual abuse field for 14 years
- Psychologist
- Interested in sibling sexual abuse
- Particularly challenging area of my work
- Seeking deeper understanding
- Interested in exploring best practice

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### The Research Question

- What are we doing?
- How do we what we do?
- How we change practice?
- How can therapists be better supported to work with families who have experienced sibling sexual abuse?

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### What did we do?

- Established a co-operative inquiry group (CIG) with 5 colleagues in the field
- Had 10 CIG meetings over 12 months
- Planning-Action-Reflection cycle
- Transcribed, Summarized sessions and invited member checking
- Used summaries to guide reflection and further planning for action

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### And then....

- Individual in depth interviews with 5 co-researchers
- In depth interviews with 4 managers of the services represented
- Collection of broad range of materials re sibling sexual abuse from print and online media, literature and film industry

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## Emerging findings

- Impact on and Parallels for the therapists
- Challenges of language to:
  - collaboration
  - to our own beliefs and reactions
  - to silence
- Social discourse Vs Psychiatric discourse
- The role of hope and compassion satisfaction

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## Impact

- Parallel processes
  - Ruptures, splits, taking sides & conflicts
  - Isolation and connections
  - Stuckness and disempowerment
  - Being parents, siblings, family members
- Managing our own anxieties, our ambivalence & anger

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## Challenges

- Challenges
  - Staying aware and managing the parallels
  - Balancing the different perspectives
  - The juggling act
  - Working across and within agencies
  - How we talk about our work – our language

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## Social & Psychiatric Discourses

- The ongoing presence of silence
- The ongoing importance of privileging the voice of the victim/survivor
- Moving away from judgement, blame and cause seeking

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## Compassion Satisfaction

- Privilege of doing the work
- Enjoying the challenge of doing the work
- Knowing how important the work is
- Being part of the journey with families
- Being passionate about the work
- Having a sense of vocation
- Finding hope in my back pocket

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## Forming action outcomes

- Presentations at CASAs, sexual assault trainings, and other forums
- Publications
- Projects for ongoing collaboration, support
  - eg. An e-group
- Recommendations and Guidelines for therapists and agencies

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### Some reflections

- What's our work about?
- What constrains us; what engages us?
- Just how much change can we expect through the PAR process?

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