

Abstract

This dissertation sets out the results of a phenomenological study, using semi-structured interviews, with eight ex-cult members (ex-members). Each was asked what helped them recover from their abusive cult experience and whether psychotherapy or counselling was sought by them. I have reviewed the literature in both the psychotherapy and the cult field and found little pertaining to cults in the former. From my review of the available literature this type of research has rarely, if ever, been attempted in this way.

My findings provide valuable insight into the recovery process from an ex-member's point of view. A number of themes emerged, including: the internal processes of recovery which link to the other areas which are: the need for education; relationship – an antidote; and reconnecting with normal life. I conclude that there is little in psychotherapy theory or practice that acknowledges the needs of this client group and that further research would be valuable.