

THE PHENOMENON OF THE RECOVERY OF JOHNNY FAMECHON: A DISCOURSE OF RESILIENCE AND BRAIN PLASTICITY

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This qualitative phenomenological research provides detailed insights into the lived experiences of the recovery of a single subject, that of former World Boxing Champion, John Famechon. John suffered an incapacitating brain injury in August 1991 when a car, estimated to be travelling at 100 kilometres per hour, hit John as he was crossing a road near Warwick Farm in Sydney. Upon discharge from hospital in October 1992, John was under the full-time care of his then fiancée, now wife, Glenys. At that time John was, as Glenys and the media of the time described his condition, as if he had been poured into a wheelchair, unable to walk, talk, or feed himself. The doctors at that time of his discharge advised that this would now be John's life: severely incapacitated, often bed-ridden, unable to fend for himself, barely able to speak; and wheelchair bound for the remainder of his life. In December 1993, John started an unforeseen new therapy involving what are referred to as hard goals and stretch goals, involving highly challenging complex movements and intense cognitive work that focussed on extending what John could do physically and mentally. As a result, from late 1993 John's presenting incapacitated condition changed, and in March 1994 John walked for the first time since the accident. Soon after that he was running. As documented in this thesis, those who knew John and his condition were amazed at the healing and significant improvements from his formerly incapacitated state – much of which was achieved by late 1994. The examination of the literature and phenomenological data indicates the reason that John's condition changed from incapacitated to recovering was due to changes in John's neurological and neuromuscular condition that appear to have mainly stemmed from late 1993, when the new therapy (complex brain-based multi-movement therapy) commenced.

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