

# Editorial

## David Trickey

I have always considered Bereavement Care to be a unique journal and I am always fascinated to observe the way in which the different articles that make up each issue fall together. The authors range from relative newcomers to the field, with little experience of publishing, to the very top names. The range of article is also extraordinary, including academically robust quantitative and qualitative research studies alongside real individual accounts of personal bereavement and descriptions of services. Each different type of article is reviewed just as rigorously and given equal weight. The articles that make up each issue are accompanied by book reviews and a brief overview of abstracts or summaries of relevant articles recently published in other journals.

The juxtaposition of sometimes very different articles highlights both their similarities and their differences. Each article, regardless of its nature, could be considered to be a separate 'story'; each story may individually have something to offer us, but when considered together can very potently broaden our understanding of bereavement and ultimately make us better at what we do.

Over the years I have been interested to note that *personally* I have favoured certain types of 'stories' over others. I arrived as an editor with a desire for the journal to publish more *quantitative research*; I wanted there to be more figures, more charts, more graphs, more large sample sizes and more statistics (with appropriate explanations). Of course I wanted such data to be understandable and helpful to our readers, but I was keen to ensure that we did not shy away from hard-nosed quantitative research articles. I had always enjoyed the first person accounts, but I'm not sure that originally I valued them quite as much; previously I considered them to be illustrations of universal themes and theories which are often based on empirical data. However, over time, and while still believing them important, I have increasingly come to see the limitations of the quantitative stories with their facts and figures based on samples of anonymous 'subjects', and I have come to appreciate the value of other types of stories. In particular I now attach far more value than before to detailed and in-depth accounts of stories of just one or a few individuals.

In this edition, as ever, there is a rich mix of diverse writings. These different articles have managed to confirm some of my current thinking while simultaneously broadening my perspective, as well as challenging some of my assumptions.

Jacqui Parkinson's first person account includes some themes with which I was familiar, such as how the experience of other people's bereavement had not prepared her for her

own (I am writing this on the train having just delivered the eulogy at my best friend's funeral). I was not surprised to read her account of the complete loss of direction and identity, and the way that events subsequent to the bereavement further destabilised the situation just at the moment that she needed at least some things to be stable and constant. It is interesting that the particular creative art that she found so helpful was stitching, because research from the field of trauma shows that visuo-spatial tasks (albeit during and shortly after a traumatic event) may assist in decreasing the vividness of memories of negative events (eg. Holmes and Bourne, 2008). Or perhaps it was the way that this particular activity provided some form of connection with other bereaved people that made it therapeutically potent.

The article by Daan Westerink and Margaret Stroebe is a fine example of how two very different types of story can be combined within one article: the individual account providing examples for the academic story, and the academic account providing a commentary for the individual story. This is a charming narrative of the loss of a grandparent which serves as a reminder that such relationships can be very significant, and therefore how devastating such a bereavement can be, even when the death could be considered to be expected and 'normal'. Similar to the first person account, this article shows how the knock-on effects of a bereavement (in this case the grieving of the parents) can further impact a bereaved person in addition to the impact of the bereavement itself.

Given that many consider meaning-making following bereavement as a crucial factor in a person's adjustment (eg. Neimeyer, 2001), Nick Gerrish and Sue Bailey present an interesting technique that could be used to explore how a bereaved person makes sense of events including their loss. They give a specific example of using the method to consider a woman's meaning-making after loss of a child. Then Atle Dyregrov and Rolf Gjestad report the results of a quantitative study of sexual activity after the loss of a child, offering quantitative evidence to shed light on a topic about which many assumptions are made.

Finally in this issue, there is a fascinating article in the Grief in the Arts series. Here Richard Armstrong offers a beautifully written review of how loss and mourning have been portrayed in film, and how cinema may provide opportunities for those bereaved to explore (and possibly make sense of) their own experiences.

Holmes EA, Bourne C (2008). Inducing and modulating intrusive emotional memories: A review of the trauma film paradigm. *Acta Psychologica* 127 553–566.

Neimeyer RA (2001). *Meaning reconstruction and the experience of loss*. Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association.