

**Exploring the concept of receptivity to bereavement support:
Implications for palliative care services in rural, regional and
remote Western Australia**

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Pippa Blackburn
B.S.W.
Master of Palliative Care
GradCert Grief & Palliative Care Counselling

School of Nursing
University of Notre Dame Australia

Declaration of Authorship

This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

P. Blackburn
Candidate's Name

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Date

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Dedication

To my precious daughter, Mia, who always wanted to be a fairy when she grew up - but became an angel instead.

My arms still yearn for our snuggles,

My ears still yearn to hear your beautiful singing voice and your gutsy belly laugh,

My lips still yearn to smother you with kisses

My eyes still yearn to behold your beautiful eyes and smile, and to watch you in all your wonder

My nose still yearns to inhale your beautiful smell of strawberries and sunshine

My mind yearns to know the girl you would have grown in to, and the woman that you would have become.

For it is in the yearning, that memories and love endure.

This is for you.

This is because of you.

I love you.

I miss you.



To my beautiful sister, Terri. You shaped so much of the woman I am. Your never-ending faith in me that I could achieve anything I set my mind to, is your legacy. The world is a lesser and smaller place without you in it. This is also for you. I miss you every day. I love you.



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Abstract

Background: Palliative care services are primary organisations that provide bereavement support in Australia and aim to mitigate potential adverse outcomes of grief and bereavement. The success of bereavement services depends, in part, on how ‘receptive’ the bereaved are to receiving support. Although palliative care services provide support services for bereaved carers and families, there still remains a discord between what is delivered, what is needed and factors that deter or encourage a person’s receptiveness to support.

Purpose: The aim of this research was to examine utilisation of bereavement support through the ‘lens’ of receptivity. Bereavement and receptivity are complex multifactorial phenomenon. This study aims to contribute further insights on receptivity to better inform bereavement service design and delivery.

Method: A qualitative descriptive research design was utilised in order to remain close to the complexity and richness of participant stories. Experiences of bereaved individuals and health professionals who provide bereavement support were explored. Participants were recruited via rural palliative care services. Thirty-four interviews were completed using open ended questions within semi-structured interviews, were transcribed verbatim and thematically analysed.

Results: Diaspora was a key theme that emerged from the findings of this study and transformed into a conceptual framework, *bereavement diaspora*. *Bereavement diaspora* integrates the key themes from the findings which include: 1) *existential diaspora*, 2) coping, 3) relationships, and 4) language. *Bereavement diaspora* situates the bereaved individual within the intrapsychic, socio-cultural, socio-political and temporal contexts which all interact to influence the experience of bereavement. It is through the *bereavement diaspora* perspective that receptivity was examined and facilitators and barriers of receptivity to support were identified.

Conclusion: *Bereavement diaspora* integrates the many factors that impact on the bereavement experience and demonstrates how the individual and broader social and systemic issues influence receptivity to support. Findings from this study provide further insights into receptivity to bereavement support which can inform palliative care bereavement support program design and delivery.