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A suicide bereavement model: based on a meta-ethnography of the experiences of adult suicide loss survivors

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A Suicide Bereavement Model: A Meta-Ethnography of the Experiences of Adult Male Suicide Loss Survivors

John Whitebrook Ph.D.

4th Annual Suicide
Research
Symposium



Alex Whitebrook

03-Feb-1991 ~ 01-May-2017



Survivors of
Bereavement
by Suicide



UNIVERSITY OF
WEST LONDON

Meta- Ethnography

Meta-Ethnography: Synthesizing Qualitative studies (Noblit & Hare, 1988):

- The synthesis of interpretive research
- Involves the translation of studies into one another
- The translation of studies takes the form of an analogy between and/or among the studies
- 'making a whole into something more than the parts alone imply'

Improving reporting of meta-ethnography: The eMERGe reporting guidance (France et al., 2019):

- To provide guidance to improve the completeness and clarity of meta-ethnography reporting
- Recommendations and good practice for all seven phases of meta-ethnography conduct and reporting were newly identified leading to 19 reporting criteria and accompanying detailed guidance

Meta-Ethnography Protocol

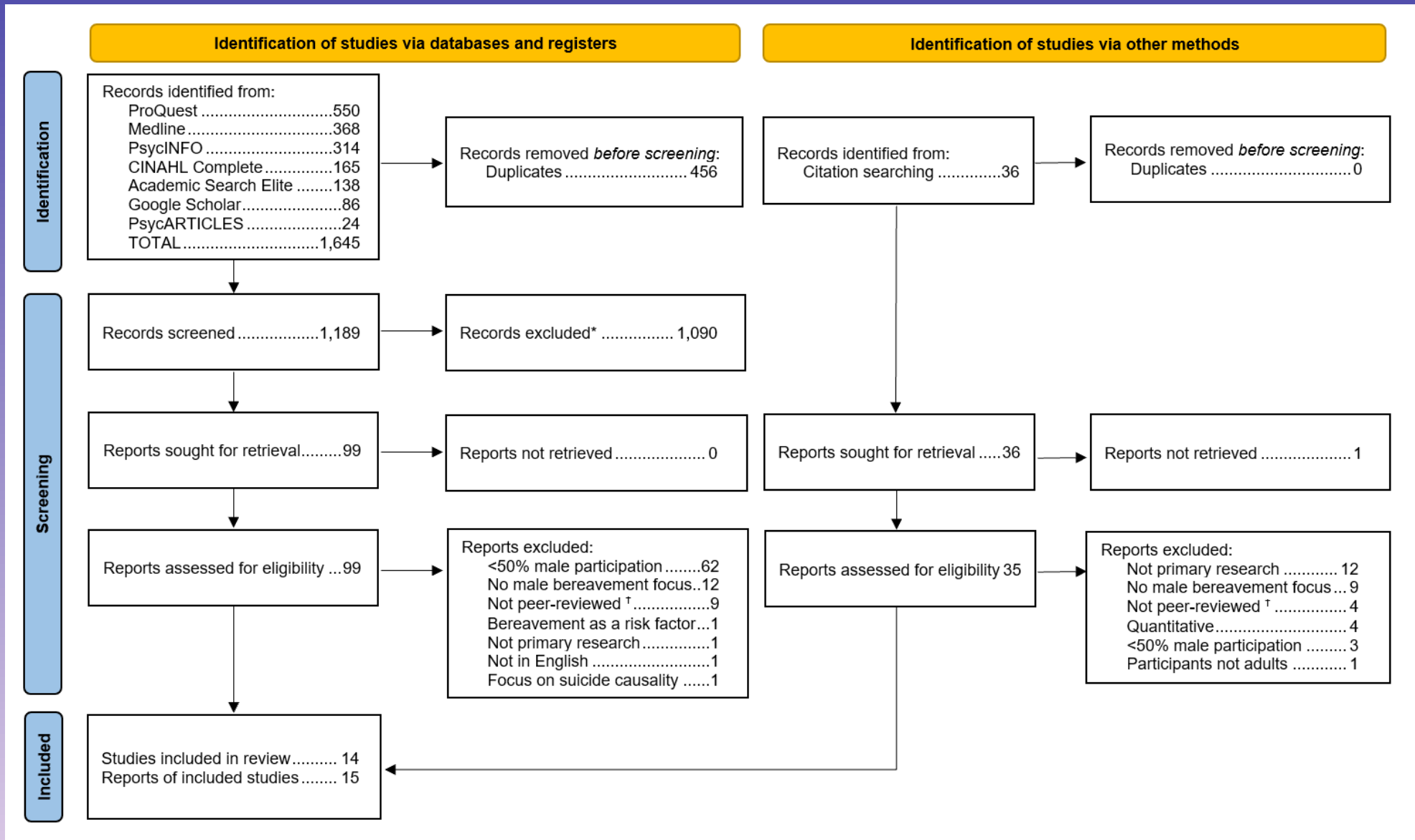
(Prospero format) <https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospero/> International prospective register of systematic reviews

- Timeframe
- Team
- Review question:
 - ***What are the lived experiences of men bereaved by suicide?***
- Data sources
- Population
- Types of study
- Data extraction
- Risk of bias (quality) assessment
- Strategy for data synthesis
- Language
- Dissemination plans
- Inclusion / exclusion criteria
- ***≥ 50% Male participation***

Data Sources

Database	Search Strategy	Results
Academic Search Elite	(suicid* OR self-killing) AND (grie* OR bereave* OR mourn* OR loss) AND (survivor* OR relative* OR relation* OR dependant* OR family OR parent OR spouse* OR widower OR child* OR sibling* OR orphan* OR friend*) AND (male* or men or man) AND Apply related words ✓ Apply equivalent subjects ✓ Language = English	138
CINAHL Complete	(suicid* OR self-killing) AND (grie* OR bereave* OR mourn* OR loss) AND (survivor* OR relative* OR relation* OR dependant* OR family OR parent OR spouse* OR widower OR child* OR sibling* OR orphan* OR friend*) AND (male* or men or man) AND Apply related words ✓ Apply equivalent subjects ✓ Language = English Limits: Human Sex = Male Age Groups = All Adult	165
Medline (OVID)	(suicid* OR self-killing) AND (grie* OR bereave* OR mourn* OR loss) AND (survivor* OR relative* OR relation* OR dependant* OR family OR parent OR spouse* OR widower OR child* OR sibling* OR orphan* OR friend*) AND (male* or men or man) AND Limits: Humans English Language Male Age Groups = All Adult (19 plus years) Map term to sub-heading ✓	368
PsycARTICLES	(suicid* OR self-killing) AND (grie* OR bereave* OR mourn* OR loss) AND (survivor* OR relative* OR relation* OR dependant* OR family OR parent OR spouse* OR widower OR child* OR sibling* OR orphan* OR friend*) AND (male* or men or man) AND Apply related words ✓ Apply equivalent subjects ✓ Age Groups = Adulthood (18 years & older) Population Group = Male Language = English (post query)	24
PsycINFO	(suicid* OR self-killing) AND (grie* OR bereave* OR mourn* OR loss) AND (survivor* OR relative* OR relation* OR dependant* OR family OR parent OR spouse* OR widower OR child* OR sibling* OR orphan* OR friend*) AND (male* or men or man) AND Apply related words ✓ Apply equivalent subjects ✓ Age Groups = Adulthood (18 years & older) Language = English Population Group = Male	314
ProQuest	(suicid* OR self-killing) AND (grie* OR bereave* OR mourn* OR loss) [in ABSTRACT] AND (survivor* OR relative* OR relation* OR dependant* OR family OR parent OR spouse* OR widower OR child* OR sibling* OR orphan* OR friend*) AND (male* or men or Language = English	550
Google Scholar	With all the words – (suicide bereavement) With the exact phrase – With at least one of the words – (qualitative research methods interview ethnographic phenomenological experience experiences) Without the words – Where my words occur – ☉in the title of the article Language = English Include citations ✓	86
TOTAL =		1645

PRISMA Flowchart



Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses

PRISMA 2020 explanation and elaboration: updated guidance and exemplars for reporting systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021)

Meta-ethnography Synthesis:

IMPACT: questioning of own existence and purpose (including suicidal ideation); searching for answers...

BLAME: judgement, disrespect, low empathy, religious dogma; self-blame leading to withdrawal...

HEALTHCARE & SUPPORT: deceased's mental health / self-harm or suicide attempts; let down by healthcare system...

DISTRESS: shock, anger, fear, guilt, agony, grief, anxiety, denial, depression, injustice...

RESPONSIBILITY: failure to keep the deceased safe; protective towards other survivors...

CULTURE: taboo regarding suicide and mourning; systemic broad and long-term denial...

MEMORIALISATION: lost futures, pride and personal growth, spirituality; relief...

INNER CONFLICTS: e.g., emotional pain but fear of losing the connection if it fades; guilty of keeping secrets...

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EIGHT CONCEPTS

Meta-ethnography Synthesis:

IMPACT: questioning of
own existence...

Changed Forever: the
impacts of suicide are
not transitional but life-
changing and
permanent...

DISTRESS: shock, anger,
fear, guilt, agony, grief,
anxiety, denial,
depression, injustice...

BLAME: judgement,
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religious dogma. Self-
blame leading to
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RESPONSIBILITY: failure

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others safe from
suicide...

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BLAME: judgement,
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RESPONSIBILITY: failure

➔ **Protector:** sense of
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MEMORIALISATION:

➔ **Lost futures:** the lives
that could have been are
mourned, even as
survivors fondly recall
those they lost...

HEALTHCARE &
SUPPORT: deceased's

➔ **Lost in plain sight:**
millions significantly
affected but not
recognised in terms of
their losses, trauma and
support needs...

CULTURE: taboo
regarding suicide and
mourning; systemic
broad and long-term
denial...

INNER CONFLICTS: e.g.,
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CULTURE: taboo

➔ **Societal norms:** losses
within framework of
culture and society;
constrained by
acceptable customs...

INNER CONFLICTS: e.g.,
emotional pain but fear
of losing the connection
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➔ **SYNTHESIS**

Meta-ethnography Synthesis:

IMPACT: questioning of
own existence

➔ **Changed Forever:** the impacts of suicide are not transitional but life-changing and permanent...

DISTRESS: shock, anger,
guilt

➔ **Trauma:** the effect of bereavement by suicide is far reaching and the adaptation process non-linear...

➔ **SYNTHESIS**

23-Apr-2025

BLAME: judgement,
disrespect

➔ **Stigmatisation:** mental health and suicide, frowned upon; survivors are frequently judged...

RESPONSIBILITY: failure

➔ **Protector:** sense of failure to protect those lost; feel responsible for subsequently keeping others safe from suicide...

MEMORIALISATION:

➔ **Lost futures:** the lives that could have been are mourned, even as survivors fondly recall those they lost...

HEALTHCARE &
SUPPORT: deceased's

➔ **Lost in plain sight:** millions significantly affected but not recognised in terms of their losses, trauma and support needs...

CULTURE: taboo

➔ **Societal norms:** losses within framework of culture and society; constrained by acceptable customs...

INNER CONFLICTS: e.g.,
emotions

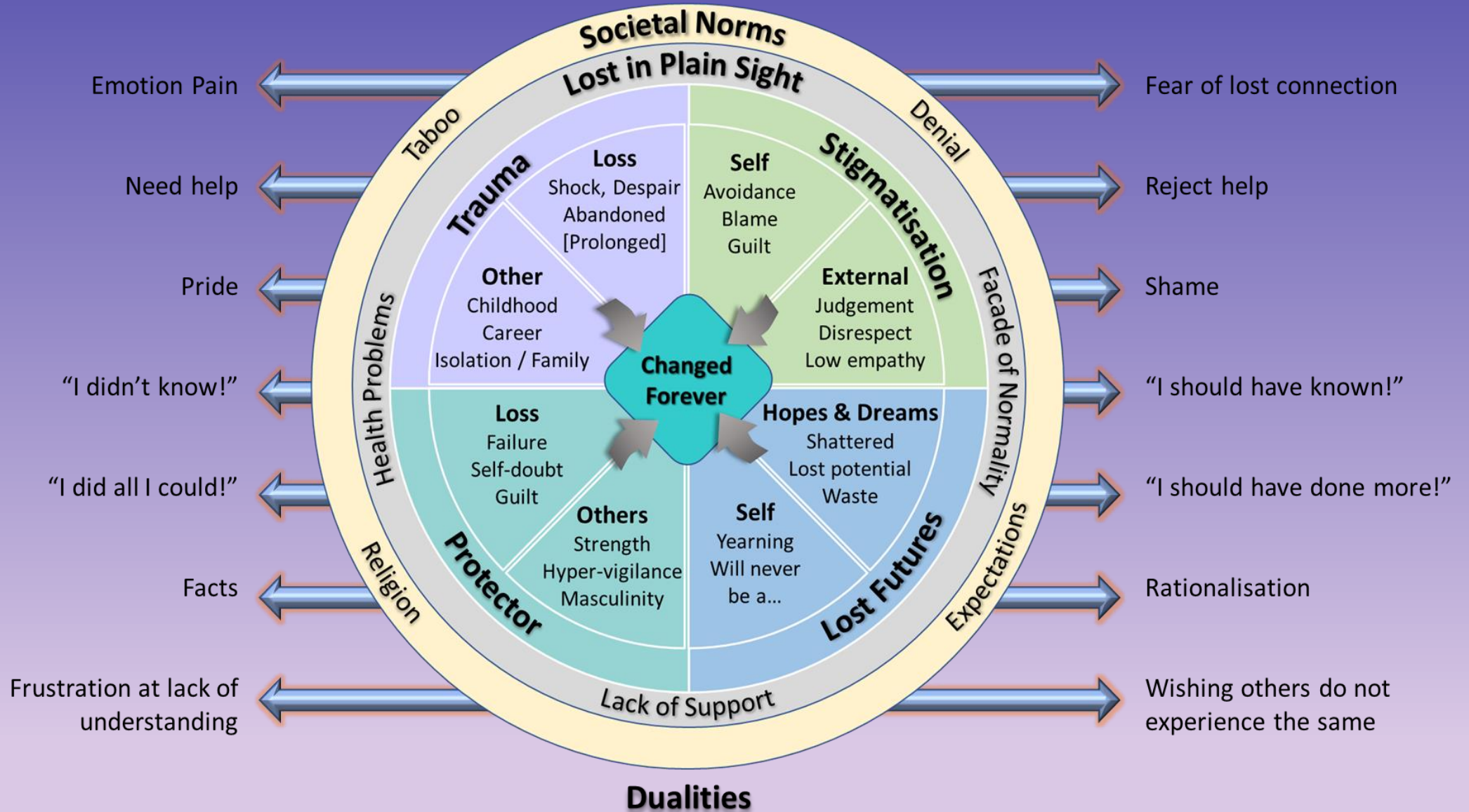
➔ **Dualities:** constantly face conflicting emotions, pressures, expectations, needs etc.; cognitive dissonance...

UWE

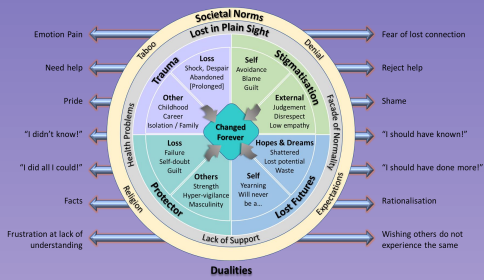
Lebrook

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Proposed Suicide Bereavement Model



- All included studies fit the proposed model:
 - Reciprocal translation, line of argument (Noblit & Hare, 1988)
- Dualities somewhat akin to the Dual Process Model (Stroebe & Schut, 1999) but with **contention** as well as **oscillation**
- Postvention research remains rare and usually regarding specific relationships to those lost
- Very little in studies specific to male bereavement:
 - Stereotypical findings – avoidance, over-working, drinking
- Need to be able to reach men that do not seek support
- Model is applicable to all suicide loss survivors

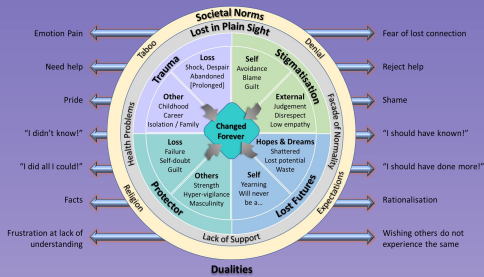


Conclusions

- Suicide bereavement highly complex & many interwoven facets
- Suicide bereavement changes people permanently:

- Recovery and growth is not linear; may be locked in grief

- Suicide bereavement *IS* different – qual. vs. quant.
- Provides a platform for dialogue and empathy
- Professionals and carers increased awareness of the magnitude of the challenges of suicide bereavement
- Facilitation of improved and extended services available to suicide loss survivors
- Support can be applied in the context of the full picture



Implications for practice

1. A phenomenological study of siblings bereaved by suicide: A shared experience (Adams et al., 2019)
2. Grief Reactions and Suicide Bereavement in the Context of Stigma among Parents: An IPA (Ali & Rehna, 2022)
3. Suicide and trauma: A case discussion (Briggs et al., 2012)
4. The “men in grief” phenomenon among suicide bereaved Chinese men in Hong Kong (Chan & Cheung, 2022)
5. Initial-Stage Suicide Bereavement Experiences: A Case Study (Chen & Laitila, 2022)
6. Experiences of Parental Suicide-Bereavement: A Longitudinal Qualitative Analysis over Two Years (Entilli et al., 2021)
 - Parents’ Experiences of Suicide-Bereavement: A Qualitative Study at 6 and 12 Months after Loss (Ross et al., 2018)
7. Stigma in the bereavement experiences of gay men who have lost a partner to suicide (Ferlatte et al., 2019)
8. Suicide bereavement and coping: a descriptive and interpretative analysis of the coping process (Gaffney & Harrigan, 2010)
9. Suicide of a close family member through the eyes of a child: A narrative case study report (Jackson et al., 2015)
10. Case Study of a Survivor of Suicide Who Lost All Family Members Through Parent–Child Collective Suicide (Lee et al., 2015)
11. We’re The First Port Of Call’ – Perspectives of Ambulance Staff on Responding to Deaths by Suicide - A Qualitative Study (Nelson et al., 2020)
12. “Doctor, please don’t say he died by suicide”: exploring the burden of suicide survivorship in a developing country (Ohayi, 2019)
13. Men on Losing a Male to Suicide: A Gender Analysis (Oliffe et al., 2018)
14. Discursive construction of fatherly suicide (Ziółkowska & Galasiński, 2017)

THANK YOU

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