

## **Abstract**

The absence within professional trainings of the phenomenological experience of bereavement, loss and grief has created a gap in the knowledge of professionals working with bereaved people. Adherence to and rigid use of traditional models neither meets the emotional nor psychological needs of those bereaved, whilst the experience of traumatic death and loss has been largely marginalised or discounted in bereavement counselling and grief therapy. Lack of emphasis upon the individual, phenomenological experiences of bereaved people and an over emphasis on schoolism in psychotherapeutic trainings have further contributed to a frequent failure in therapeutically meeting the lived experience of those who encounter both prolonged and traumatic grief experience.

This research challenges psychotherapy practitioners to adopt an epistemology of bereavement founded upon loss and grief phenomena in lieu of a specific theoretical orientation and approach to practice. It further aims to ameliorate therapeutic benefit to the client group by developing practitioner insight through an inter-professional lens. Thus, by extending the knowledge base of practitioners, the hoped for aim is to better inform the practice of professionals who are engaged in working with bereaved people.

An action research approach was adopted in trainings with adult professionals using a co-operative action research methodology underpinned by action research science. A teaching and learning paradigm underscored the interlocking action research cycles formulated on Heron and Reason's (2008) extended epistemology of fourfold 'knowing'. Participants' responses and contributions were captured to identify their engagement with the training content and its applicability to their work with clients. Participants were drawn from eight different psychotherapeutic trainings and extended cycles separately involved homogenous student focus groups from Child Nursing and Counselling & Psychotherapy.

General findings from the research identified the significance of key professional stakeholders to the psychological well being of bereaved people and the importance of inter-professional collaboration and exchange of profession specific knowledge for the benefit of both the bereaved and those working with them in a professional context.

Specific outcomes were: Client Narrative, Interpersonal Assessment Form for Bereavement; a set of 5 diagrams for transtheoretical psychotherapy training; a Teaching, Learning & Quality Matrix as an ipsative formative assessment tool.

**Keywords:** Bereavement, traumatic grief; transtheoretical paradigm, inter-professional learning, mimetic traumatisation.