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**From Caregiving to Bereavement:  
Weaving the Strands of Identity**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements**

**for the degree of**

**Master of Social Work**

**at Massey University**

**Palmerston North, New Zealand**

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**2009**

# **“From caregiving to bereavement: Weaving the strands of identity”**

## **Abstract**

**“In what ways does the experience of caregiving for a terminally ill family member affect the experience and process of bereavement?”**

The identity of family caregivers in palliative care has been ambiguous: caregivers are often unaware they fit the description of ‘carer’. Previous research describes two contrasting constructs that shape the identity of the caregiver: burden and privilege. Research, including this study, suggests that the emergence of identity as a carer impacts on the course and experience of bereavement. Two semi – structured interviews were conducted with a small number of caregiving family members: during the caregiving role and in their subsequent bereavement. This exploratory study used phenomenological research to examine the experiences of those caregivers interviewed. The data were examined using the existential themes uncovered in analysis. This paper reports on those themes.

## Acknowledgments

A book, thesis, or piece of writing is not merely a compilation of thoughts, but the reflective narrative of a certain period in a life. And because no single life is ever lived in entire isolation, every author is dependent on others for their support and input. It gives me much pleasure to acknowledge those others who have assisted me:

- To my parents who valued the art of storytelling, the richness of the literary word and the awareness that a good story is emblematic of larger stories
- To my sisters who kept that same story telling alive
- To my husband for pragmatism, humour, extreme technical know-how, and his profound ability to keep the home fires burning
- To our children for allowing parental absence for these four years of study
- To Dr Mary Nash and Dr Martin Sullivan the supervisors who have gently guided me through the development and completion of this study, and for their valuable, wise and encouraging feedback
- And finally my deep appreciation to those participants who gave their time and told me of their own experience and the meanings they found in those experiences. I remain immensely grateful for the learning and reflective process that each of the participants has given me. They inspired me with their courage in the face of their caregiving and bereavement.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

**The heart has its own comfort for grief**

**Janet Frame  
Rain on the Roof. 1967**