

**NARRATIVES ON DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT FROM
THREE SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURES**

By

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ABSTRACT

This Social Constructionist study originated from the researcher's exposure to a significant loss and her unanswered questions about other cultures' experience of grief. Literature is scarce from a social constructionist framework that focuses on the cultural experiences on death and bereavement from a South African perspective.

The researcher's aim was to provide three culturally diverse South African women constructed as 'bereaved' the opportunity to tell their stories of the death of a loved one and their bereavement thereof. The three diverse cultures were Tswana, Islamic Muslim and Afrikaans. A qualitative research method was employed. Unstructured, in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the three participants and the method used to analyze the collected data was thematic content analysis.

The study allowed rich and valuable information about death and bereavement from three culturally diverse women to emerge. The themes of 'mourning procedures and practices', 'bereavement behaviour' 'socio-political context' and 'private and public display of grief' were identified as valuable areas for clinical practice and future research. Lay people, schools and the work environment too, will gain a better understanding of cultural differences on death and bereavement.

Key Terms

Afrikaans; Afterlife; Bereavement; Culture; Ceremonies; Constructivism; Cybernetics; Death; Ethnic; Funeral practices; Grief; In-depth inquiry; Loss; Mourning; Modernism; Muslim; Postmodernism; Qualitative research; Religion; Research Methodology; Social constructionist; Support; Thematic content analysis; Tswana; Western

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*Dedicated to my late mother,
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Who initiated this personal journey when she passed away on 9th March 2002.*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We understand death only after it has laid its hand on someone we love

Anne L de Stael

A Personal Statement

The researcher acknowledges that this present study was conducted as a concern and commitment to herself and to her fellowmen. The journey began when death ‘laid its hand’ on her mother. Her previous knowledge on death and bereavement did not cushion her, nor did it prevent her from being tossed blindly into a painful dark abyss for days, weeks and months. During her time of bereavement she found herself asking many questions about death and bereavement, questions such as: is it possible for one to be fully prepared for the loss of a loved one? And, do all bereaved individuals pass through the same ‘dark journey’ of bereavement as she had? Her concern was whether the grieving responses and bereavement experiences of various ethnic groups were fully acknowledged by all mental health professionals. Another concern of hers was whether all cultures, especially the previously oppressed, were permitted to grieve their loss in their culturally-prescribed way? Over time, the researcher triumphed over her tragedy and came to understand the loss of her loved one. Her experience of death and her own understanding of grief sparked a compelling need to hear the narratives of the many others who have also experienced bereavement. It also sparked a need to encourage those who have had no voice in the past, to tell their personal stories of their own experience of the loss of a loved one.

Introduction

The phenomena of death and bereavement have been extensively researched and analyzed conceptually, psychoanalytically, biologically, socially and culturally (Averill, 1968; Bowlby, 1973; Eisenbruch, 1984a; Eisenbruch, 1984b; Gorer, 1965; Parke & Weiss, 1983; Rosenblatt, Walsh and Jackson, 1976; Van Gennep, 1960; Worden, 1983; Weiss, 1986). The popular belief that grief has a biological base and is universal (Worden, 1983) laid the path for criticism and debate. Research from various cross-cultural studies have indicated that diversity is everywhere in biological systems and that the response to death may not be universal (Eisenbruch, 1984a, 1984b; Klaas, 1999, 2000). It appears that culture may impact the experience of grief and that there is diversity in the personal internal experience that follows the death of a loved one (Brison & Lewitt, 1995; Catlin, 2001; Lovell, Hemmings & Hill, 1993). South Africa, the 'rainbow nation', is diverse in culture, and has been greatly influenced by a dominant Western perspective in the past. Barley (cited in Klaas, 1999, p.164) claims there "is no such thing as 'grief' except as a Western cultural concept". In accordance to a postmodern perspective, ideas, concepts and constructs are believed to be "socially constructed and our taken for granted assumptions are sustained by and supportive of social, moral, political and economic institutions" (Gergen, 1985, p. 268). Death and bereavement from a postmodern perspective may be viewed as a co-constructed idea or concept that has been defined as such by a group of people that has arisen from social interchange within that groups' given community or society. This study has been conducted from a collaborative Social constructionist perspective. Three culturally diverse South African women constructed as 'bereaved' were given the opportunity to tell their own personal narratives on death and bereavement during an in-depth inquiry with the researcher.

Explaining the Title

The title *Narratives on Death and Bereavement from three South African Cultures* was chosen since the researcher's aim was to allow three culturally diverse South African individuals who construct themselves as 'bereaved' to relate their story on death and bereavement. 'Death' is defined by the Collins Cobuild English Dictionary (1998) as "the end of life of a person or animal" (p.177). Bereavement is defined as the "objective situation of an individual who has recently experienced the loss of someone significant through that person's death" (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987, p. 7). The Collins Cobuild Essential English dictionary defines bereavement as "the experience you have or the state you are in when a relative or close friend dies" (p.67). Culture is defined by Krakeur, Cremer and Fox (cited in Werth, Blevins, Toussaint & Durham, 2002) as "a constellation of shared meanings, values, ritual and modes of interacting with others that determine how people view and make sense of their world" (p.184). Since South Africa is diverse in culture, and since there is diversity in the experience of grief, the researcher hoped to give the three culturally diverse participants the opportunity to narrate their own private and public experience of the death of a loved one and their subsequent grieving experience thereof.

The Aim of the Study

The aim of the researcher is give the three culturally diverse participants who are constructed as 'bereaved' an opportunity to voice their story of death and bereavement in a safe environment. The researcher hopes that by conducting an in-depth inquiry, rich, enlightening and valuable knowledge may come to the fore concerning the participants' particular social, historical and cultural traditions on death and bereavement (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Further, it is also hoped that an alternative social reality and a new understanding about death and bereavement in a 'new democratic' South Africa may be constructed and presented. In the past, mental health professionals in South Africa had been greatly influenced by a dominant Western outlook. "Dominant beliefs that dictate single accounts of reality or singular truths" have been challenged by Social Constructionists (Hoffman, 1991, p. 5). It has been alleged that problems can arise when a dominant belief system pathologies those who do not 'fit in' or belong to the said dominant group's ascribed rules, norms and

traditions (Beuster, 1997; Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). There are many South Africans from the past apartheid era who had been oppressed and subjugated by the minority dominant group present at that time and may have been psychologically misdiagnosed due to a lack of knowledge and a misunderstanding of their diverse and particular cultural values and beliefs (Beuster, 1997). Since values, beliefs, attitudes and traditions seem to vary from one culture group to another, for the many who experience death and bereavement, a Western linear outlook on death and bereavement may not reflect the beliefs, values and cultures of all people in South Africa.

The researcher acknowledges that she has a pre-existing sense of the phenomena of death and bereavement which she derived from her own personal experience of her loss. She acknowledges that her own ideas and concepts, and the construct and co-constructing of concepts between her and the participants during the in-depth inquiry, may influence the final outcome of the analysis of the participant's narratives. The researcher believes that the knowledge gained may provide a new understanding and a non-judgmental alternative viewpoint on death and bereavement which may assist the mental health system, schools and the work environment in South Africa.

The Design of the Study

Literature on death reveals that studies had been conducted from a historical, analytical, conceptual and social theoretical perspective (Eisenbruch, 1984a; Palgi & Abramovitch 1984; Von Gennep, 1960). One of the earliest studies conducted on bereavement is the study 'Mourning and Melancholia' by Freud (Averill, 1968). Freud paved the way for further positivistic studies which included psychoanalytical, biological and conceptual-based studies. The nature and determinants of grief, grief models and pathological grief have also been extensively explored within these theoretical frameworks and dominated the research field for many years (Averill 1968; Bailey & Gregg, 1986; Bowlby, 1973; Dopson & Harper, 1983; Gorer, 1965; Parkes, 1996; Parkes & Weiss, 1983; Rosenblatt, Walsh & Jackson, 1976; Weiss, 1998; Worden 1999). The premise that grief is universal encouraged a wide range of cross-cultural studies which explored, described and compared grief and bereavement amongst various cultures (Averill & Nunley, 1988; Bopape, 1995; Brison & Leavitt, 1995;

Caitlan, 1993; Eisenbruch, 1984a; Eisenbruch, 1984b; Klaas, 2000; Mndende, 1997; Rosenblatt, Walsh & Jackson, 1976)).

To understand how ‘prevailing norms’ of death and bereavement have evolved over time and to challenge narratives on death and bereavement that claim to be privileged and entitled: (Doan, 1997, p. 129), the present study will be conducted from a Social Constructionist epistemology. This psychological approach may allow “ideas and attitudes that have developed over time” within the various social communities in South Africa to come to the fore (Doan, 1997, p. 129). The Social constructionist approach falls under the umbrella of Postmodernism which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Method

The method best suited to collect data for a social constructionist study is the qualitative method. Qualitative research allows information to be elicited in the form of language rather than in the form of numbers. The researcher will utilize two different approaches from the qualitative research method.

The first approach is the interpretive approach which enables the researcher to focus on making sense of the participant’s subjective feelings, experiences and social situations on death and bereavement as they have happened in their world. The second approach is the social constructionist approach. This approach, according to Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2002) “seeks to analyze how signs and images have powers to create particular representations of people and objects that underlie our experiences of these people and objects” (p.148). These two approaches will enable the researcher to understand the various accounts of reality and understand death and bereavement from the three cultural contexts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

The qualitative method also allows the researcher to conduct an in-depth interview inquiry with each of the participants. The researcher will begin the inquiry by allowing each of the participants to tell their own personal stories of their loss and bereavement as it happened in their own social context. Once the interview inquiry is completed, the researcher will

reconstruct the participants' stories in terms of various themes and then compare these themes and link them to the literature review.

Sampling and selection

The study will use a purposive sampling technique. All three of the participants will be females of various ages and will be purposely selected from three diverse cultures which bear relevance from the past and present historical context of South Africa. Each participant had recently (within a year) experienced the loss of a significant loved one in their family, for example, a spouse, a child, a father, a mother or an in-law and was therefore constructed as 'bereaved'. The 'bereaved' participants for the research project will consist of an Indigenous Tswana South African woman of African descent, an Indian Muslim South African woman of Indian decent and a Caucasian Afrikaans South African woman of Western/European descent. Each participant resides in the Limpopo region of South Africa. Finally, the participants will also be selected on the basis of their willingness to share their narratives of death and bereavement with the researcher.

Data collection

Prior to the inquiry, the researcher will seek the basic relevant information of each participant, for example, their age, their culture and their ancestry line. Each participant will be informed about the nature of the study. They will be fully informed about the taping procedure. The procedure of the in-depth inquiry will commence in an open-ended, unstructured manner to allow for spontaneity in the participants' responses. It is expected that during conversations with the participants, various questions will naturally emerge from the research process.

Interviews present the researcher with rich and meaningful data. From a constructionist approach, the interview is seen as a stadium within which specific linguistic patterns such as typical phrases, arguments and stories 'can come to the fore'. Meaning that is created in the in-depth interviews will be treated as "co-constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002. p.153). Each participant will have the right to privacy and will be interviewed in a situation that would best suit them and their circumstances. The participants' will be made to feel at ease and comfortable, enabling them to unreservedly share their personal story.

Data analysis

The audio taped data obtained from the interviews will be transcribed in full. Thematic content analysis will be used to identify and to analyze the transcribed data into meaningful themes. Thematic content analysis is an appropriate method to analyze qualitative research since subjective meaningful data can be interpreted and ‘what the text does’ and ‘how it does it’ can be revealed (Terre Blanch & Durrheim, 2002, p. 160). Additionally the benefit of content analysis is its flexibility and how it is well-suited to the constructionist paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher will follow the guidelines that Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) and Braun and Clarke (2006) provide for content analysis processing. The researcher hopes to “reveal cultural material from which particular utterances, texts or events have been constructed”(Terre Blanche& Durrheim, 2002, p. 154).

There are various steps needed to practically execute the present study and they are as follows:

- The researcher will explain the purpose and procedure of the study to each participant. Each participant will then be asked to complete a form consenting to the tape recording of the in-depth inquiry. To protect the privacy and anonymity of the participant the actual signed consent form of each participant will not be included in the study. An example of the consent form presented to the participants is attached as Appendix A.
- Appointments will be scheduled and each participant will be interviewed separately. The study of death and bereavement is a sensitive topic therefore interviews will be scheduled and adjusted according to each participant’s requirements and personal needs.
- Once the interviews are completed, the audio recordings will be transcribed verbatim. These transcribed interviews will be available on request.
- Themes from each of the three cultural diverse narratives will be identified.
- These themes will then be highlighted, categorized analyzed, compared and linked to the relevant literature surveyed.

The Format of the Study

The present study will comprise of both a theoretical component and a practical component. These two components are discussed below.

The theoretical component will include a literature review on death and bereavement, a discussion of the epistemological stance (theoretical framework) and a discussion of the research methods used by the researcher in this study. The theoretical aspect of the study will be formally written, thus adhering to the academic requirements.

The literature review includes the researcher's survey and exploration of existing theories and models of grief and bereavement and the results of previous research centred on the topic of death and bereavement. The literature review provides the reader with an orientation of the literature on death and bereavement. A research background on the history of death, an analysis of grief, bereavement behaviour and the determinants and behaviour of bereavement will be given. A comparative analysis will be made between emerging themes of the research. Previous studies on bereavement have focused on a modernistic approach, and cross-cultural studies have focused on the differences and similarities across cultures when dealing with bereavement. The present study however, is conducted from a social constructionist perspective and focuses on an alternative voice on death and bereavement. The researcher in her study will thus gather information from the participant's narratives and compare the themes that emerge from the construction of their stories and link the analysis of the narratives up with the literature survey and previous research.

The practical component of the study will allow three cultural diverse women in South Africa who are constructed as 'bereaved' the space to tell their own personal story of their bereavement. The voices of the participants will be added to the voices of the literature, and together the two realities will be co-constructed. From a Social Constructionist viewpoint, reality of bereavement is constructed as individuals understand and assign different meanings to their loss and pain. The researcher's own reality and experience of death and bereavement will also contribute to the co-constructed process of the present study and may therefore contribute to the outcome of the study. The practical component of the study will be written in an informal language.

The Presentation of the Study

The presentation of the study will be conducted through the following chapters.

Chapter 2 will consist of a basic study of the literature available on death and bereavement. Firstly, a brief discussion of death and the history of death will be highlighted, including a general discussion of the afterlife, religion, rituals, and funeral and bereavement practices. Thereafter an analysis on grief will follow. The determinants and the behaviour of bereavement from various perspectives (biological, psychological and cultural) will be discussed and the various outcomes of studies will be noted. Finally the universality of grief will be discussed. This chapter will enlighten the reader of the influential dominant Western outlook on research conducted on death and bereavement.

Chapter 3 will consist of a discussion of the theoretical framework of the study. The chapter will first commence with a discussion of modernism, and will move towards a discussion of postmodernism and its basic assumptions. Constructivism will then be highlighted. Finally the basic principles of the social constructionist epistemology will follow, highlighting the social constructionist approach in the present study.

Chapter 4 will explain the research design and method that was considered to be most suitable for the study. The sample design and sampling method used in the study will be highlighted. Full details of the data collection, data collection techniques and settings will be presented. The researcher will describe the procedures that will be used to capture and edit the data. A discussion of the techniques used to analyze the data will also be explained.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 will present the reconstruction of the final results of the analysis of the inquiry of each participant. The main trends, themes and patterns that emerged from the transcribed material of each of the three participants will be discussed separately in each chapter.

Chapter 8 will compare the analysis of the occurring themes of the study of the three participants, while comparing these themes with those that emerged from the reviewed literature in chapter 2.

Chapter 9, the conclusion of the study, will highlight the limitations and the strengths of the study and show how the study can be applied to clinical practice. It will also include the relevance of this study in guiding future research.

Conclusion

Research conducted on the response to death and bereavement has focused on the analysis, the nature and the determinants of grief from biological, psychological and cultural aspects. Research also highlights the social context of grief (Rosenblatt, 1988) as well as the social constructionist's viewpoint of grief as an emotion (Averill & Nunley, 1988). Personal accounts of death and bereavement narrated from a South African perspective appear to be missing from the literature. The present study will be conducted from a social constructionist theoretical perspective and will utilize a qualitative research method to give voice to three culturally diverse 'bereaved' women in South Africa. The researcher hopes to elicit a new and rich understanding of death and bereavement from the co-constructed stories of the three participants who may have been affected by a dominant societal environment.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

**Death is the privilege of human nature,
and life without it were not worth our taking**

Nicholas Rowe

Introduction

Death is a fact of life. At some point in our lives we will experience the loss of a loved one through death. The response to death is grief. Grieving over a loss it seems is a natural process by which the bereaved must relinquish the attachment to the lost person. Clinically, grief does not fit any particular category according to the American Psychiatric Association of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition, text revised (DSM-IV). From the Medical model point-of-view (a prominent voice in psychological literature), if an individual's grief extends 'over the time', with the individual not seeking any treatment, and severe symptoms such as 'psychotic features' emerging, then according to the DSM-IV classification system, what is termed 'normal grief' may change into a full blown mood disorder and may then be called pathological grief reaction or impacted grief reaction (Barlow & Durand, 1995, p.257). The participants in the present study need to have experienced the death of a significant loved one within the past calendar year, and would thus construct themselves as being 'bereaved'. A brief historical account of death will be given, as well as a discussion on religious beliefs and the afterlife. Bereavement practices, funerals and ceremonies will be highlighted too. An analysis of grief will also be given. The determinants and behaviour of bereavement will be traced along a psychological, biological, systems and cultural context. Thereafter the universality of grief will follow.

Death and the History of Death

Death dates back to the beginning of creation. (Holy Bible, King James Version, 1976, Genesis, Ch.4 v.8, p.6), and since then death has become a fact of life. Death is a part of our lives and gives meaning to our existence. According to Kubler-Ross (1975) death should not be seen as an enemy to be conquered, but rather as a friend on one's life journey and should

remind us of our human vulnerability and what is still needed to be done in this lifetime. Kubler-Ross (1975) claims that it is those who have not truly lived their life to the fullest, who have not fulfilled their dreams or who have unresolved issues who are the most reluctant to die.

Philippe Aries, a French historian, traced the Western attitude towards mortality in Europe from the early Christian era to the present day, and came up with four psychological themes; the awareness of the individual, the defence of society against untamed nature, belief in an afterlife and belief in the existence of evil (Palgi & Abramovitch, 1984). Aries arranged his data in chronological order, and his first concept *the tame death* explains the earliest attitude towards death. Death, it seemed, was something the individual prepared himself for. It was regarded as a state of peaceful sleep if one had no past impiety. Rituals were carried out without any emotion and this particular attitude towards death continued into the middle ages.

His second concept, *the death of the self*, focused on the importance of the self rather than broader society. Death was regarded as a natural phenomenon. The focal point was on the dying individual and the control that individual had over others after their death. For instance, the wealthy would have written a Will which would direct the personal possessions to the survivors left behind. This attitude is confirmed by Eisenbruch (1984a), who observed that during the late middle ages, the religious and the secular elite had abandoned the fact that 'we all die' and focused on 'their own deaths'. They had become anxious not only about their own deaths but also about their earthly possessions. The afterlife became most significant by the fourteenth and fifteenth century and focused on the separation of the body and the soul. Views on the afterlife will be discussed in more detail under the next heading. It was believed the dying had to reckon for his soul with the good and evil forces on his death bed. His moral attitude at the time of his death determined his fate on Judgment day. This attitude continued well into the nineteenth century.

Aries' (1974) third concept, *remote and imminent death*, exposed death as a fearful and violent event similar to the perception of sex, between the sixteenth and eighteenth century. Death was not seen as a natural phenomenon anymore but rather as something that 'raped the living'. Aries declared however that by the nineteenth century 'death' was apparently "left as remote arousing strange curiosities and eroticisms" (Palgi & Abramovitch, 1984, p.407).

From the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the focus was *the death of the other*. Aries (as cited in Palgi & Abramovitch, 1984) alleged this shift in feeling was “as important to history as the related revolution in ideas, politics, socioeconomic conditions, or demography” (p.408). The fear of death was not on the self anymore, but rather on the other. The belief in sin and hell slowly diminished and it seemed that the survivors now became the focal point. The bereaved did not mourn the fact of death anymore but they mourned the pain of the separation of their loved one. Christian and non-believers alike began to share the concept of the reunion with the deceased in the next world. It appeared that “death had become beautiful” (Palgi & Abramovitch, 1984, p. 408).

The fourth concept of death was *the invisible death*. According to Aries (cited in Palgi & Abramovitch, 1984), the invisible death signified that the subject of death was regarded as a prohibited subject. Death had appeared to have lost its ‘beauty’ and was not regarded as natural anymore and was somehow not socially important. Death was now considered to be an ugly thing which was to be kept out of sight and one was forbidden to discuss it or talk about it. The dying individual was no longer expected to die at home as had been done in the past, but rather in a hospital where the medical field was in a position to take complete control of the situation (Gorer, 1965). Aries (cited in Palgi & Abramovitch, 1984) stated that death was immediately ignored and was almost seen as an ‘admission of defeat’ (p.408). During this period it seemed that people behaved as if death did not exist and it appeared that the bereaved was enforced to say nothing.

Death from a Western perspective was to be a dignified departure for the deceased and the survivors were not to be too upset nor were they to show their pain and suffering, let alone their fear of death. It appeared that modern technology combined the cold discipline and anonymity of the medical field and the sense that the subjects of death and dying were taboo, a fear of death appeared to have surfaced in society (Gorer, 1965; Kubler-Ross, 1975; Palgi & Abramovitch, 1984).

Casrse (1981), (cited in Eisenbruch, 1984a), claimed that death was misunderstood and it has been a source of terror in the people as early as during the time of Epicurus. Epicurus considered that the grief one experienced while mourning was the ‘living death’. A popular notion in Platonic thought was the idea that the mortal soul of the deceased would be exposed to punishment for their wrongdoing by their gods. This is still believed in some religions and

cultures today (Parry & Ryan, 1975). Ancient Egyptians were also troubled by death and by the passage of life and even Socrates deliberated that “death may be better than life” (Eisenbruch, 1984a, p.316).

To the bereaved, death was also a reminder to acknowledge that their future was unsure. One was not to concern oneself about one’s death, but rather one was to focus and live in the present. Kubler-Ross (1975) pointed out that death reminds us that our time is limited and we must live our lives purposefully and we should ‘do’ the things that would make our lives more meaningful. She also declares that “to rejoice at the opportunity of exploring each new day is to prepare for one’s ultimate acceptance of death” (p.xi).

By the nineteenth century the focus was placed on the family. West Europeans detached themselves from the old ways and accepted new attitudes towards death and dying. The doctor did not determine the individual’s fate anymore and he only gave his expert advice when it was requested. It was the family who made the decisions of the fate of the dying man and his death thus became a family affair. The entire family was included in saying goodbye to the dying (Eisenbruch, 1984a).

Keeping the memory of the deceased alive was also more important than dying in the presence of the clergy. Mndende, (1997) stated that according to the indigenous attitude towards dying, it is a dying person’s wish to “leave order and harmony behind” and to “be with his family” during his final days (p.796). Today most people die at hospitals, and yet Mndende (1997) states that hospitals are widely regarded by South Africans of African descent as a “place to receive primary health care and not a place for death for it is a ‘foreign’ structure” (p.796). Kubler-Ross (1975) alleges that a hospital is a “depersonalizing institution’ and a death in a hospital represents a failure to sustain life” (p.6).

Aries showed an interest in the American attitude to death since he claimed that they paid more attention to the dying than the Europeans did. However, according to Dr Mahoney, a professor of Anthropology, America is presently considered to be a society that denies the potency of death, especially in comparison to other cultures (Kubler-Ross, 1975). Kubler-Ross (1975) states that death may remind us of our vulnerability and that to die means giving up on life and perhaps that is why it is regarded as an unspeakable topic (Kubler-Ross, 1975).

Kubler-Ross (1975) alleged that “all that you are and all that you’ve done and been, is culminated in your death” (p. x). It appears that the experience of death can be favourable in our lives and we should embrace it since it helps us to mature and grow. She said;

“Death can be very hard to face and we might be tempted to avoid it and flee from having to confront it. But if you have the courage to deal with it when it comes into your life – to accept it as an important and valuable part of life–then, whether you are facing your own death, that of someone in your care or that of a love one, you will grow’

(Kubler-Ross, 1975, p. 117)

It appears that from a religious perspective, a person’s thoughts of death form an essential core of creeds, myths and mysteries. Religion is defined in the Collins Cobuild Essential English Dictionary as “the belief in a god or gods and the activities that are connected with this belief, such as prayer or worship in a church or temple” (1998, p.669). Emile Durkheim defined religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, that is to say things set apart and forbidden” (Haralambos, 1985, p.455). The sociology of religion was seen as part of a greater field, that “religion helped to build, maintain and legitimize universes of meaning” (p.464).

According to Kubler-Ross (1975), the questions that one explores through one’s myths and religion are focused on the themes of rebirth, resurrection and the after-life (p.1). It is when death lays its hand on a loved one that we ask ourselves questions like, ‘Is death the end?’ Or ‘Is there life after death?’

However, death is not seen as the end of life; on the contrary, it seems that ceremonies that accompany an individual’s life crisis are called rites of passage and Van Gennep (1960) viewed death as one of a series of ritual passage rites through life (p. 3) It appears that certain South African’s such as the Hindu, Bapedi believe that death is indeed only a physical separation and not the end of one’s existence entirely (Bopabe, 1996; Kasiram & Partab, 2002; Mndende, 1997). Death may serve as a rite of passage from the physical world to the spiritual world.

Christianity embraces the belief that death is certainly not the end. While it appears that the body decays and returns to dust and that the immortal spirit goes to its eternal destiny. Christians believe that there will be a resurrection of the body at the end of time, meaning that the body and the spirit will once again be united. They believe too that death has been conquered by Jesus Christ and that they are assured that as a believer they will have eternal life with God (Powell, 1981; Parry & Ryan, 1995).

Death viewed from Catholicism is accordingly different to other Christian groups. Although the Catholic faith views death as a passage from this life to the new life and that death is a separation of the soul from the body, Catholics also believe in purgatory, which other Christian groups do not. According to Catholicism, purgatory is a place of purification. This means that while the good souls go to heaven, the imperfect souls purge themselves of their sin in purgatory (Gorer, 1965; Parry & Ryan, 1995).

Purgatory had an enormous impact in the middle-ages, since it was believed that the prayers of the survivors could shorten the period the deceased would have to spend in purgatory. These ceremonies and religious rituals mirrored the beliefs of the Puritan culture and at the approach of the Renaissance it seemed that their funeral rituals had become conditioned to abuse. Elaborate funerals and what was considered to be the Catholic 'corruption of the bereaved' was criticized by the reformers since the reformers believed the future of the deceased had already been determined whilst he was living (Eisenbruch, 1984a).

The Islamic faith teaches Muslims that their faith is sealed from the beginning of the creation of the soul, and they do believe that death is God's (Allah's) will (Hosking, Whiting, Brathwate, Fox, Bosshoff & Robbins, 2000). Muslims also believe that there is life after death and they will be held accountable to Allah on the Day of Judgment and that their actions will be judged by Allah in the life hereafter.

Hertz (cited in Palgi & Abramovitch, 1984) regards death as a social event that initiates a person into a social afterlife, and not as an immediate destruction of an individual's life. It appeared that in the Hindu culture "the deceased are viewed as undergoing another birth in accordance with the seeds of desire and attachment that they have sown" (Kasiram & Partab, 2002, p.42) and thus death is regarded as a ceremonial process whereby the deceased becomes an ancestor, a type of rebirth.

It is evident in many Indigenous South African communities that death does not “break the link with the individual rather it connects the past to the future and the dead with a new life” (Kasiram & Partab, 2002, p.43). Indigenous South Africans also believe that the ancestral spirit needs material goods for the life after death and that the deceased will have the same status in the life hereafter, thus implying that death is indeed a social event (*The Introduction to Ethnology, Intec*, 1990).

According to Hertz 1960 (cited in Palgi & Abramowitch, 1984), it seems that primitive people do not view death as a natural phenomenon, rather;

“Society imparts its own character of permanence to the individuals who compose it; because it feels itself immortal and wants to be so, it cannot normally believe that its members, above all those it incarnates itself and with whom it identifies itself, should be fated to die. Their destruction can only be the consequence of a sinister plot. Thus when a man dies, society loses in him much more than a unit; it is stricken in the very principle of its life in the faith it has in itself” (p.389).

Haralambos (1985) recorded that the Dugum Dani culture of New Guinea also does not believe that death is natural; rather, they believe that it is the "mogat" (the ghost) of the dead that causes illness and death in their society. The people therefore perform certain rituals to mollify and pacify the ghost.

The study of grief and mourning of 78 different cultures by Rosenblatt, Walsh & Jackson (1976) provides evidence that many cultures believe in ‘ghosts’. ‘Animism’ is a belief in spirits and originated to satisfy man’s intellect, to help man make sense of death, dreams and visions (Haralambos, 1985). Rosenblatt et al (1976) define ‘ghost beliefs’ as “people in a culture typically believe either that ghosts, spirits apparitions or other manifestations of specific deceased persons are themselves capable of being perceived or that the results of actions by such entities are capable of being perceived” (p.51). Of the sixty-six societies for which information was available to those rating ghost beliefs, ghost beliefs were rated present in sixty five. Their conclusion was that ghost beliefs were “universal cross-culturally” although the Western cultures who do believe in ghosts did not readily admit to believing in ghosts for fear of being scorned.

According to Kalish and Reynold 1973 (cited in Rosenblatt et al 1976) a belief in ghosts or spirits is a natural one and is consistent with human nature. It appears that ghost perceptions develop out of one's dreams. It seems that the unconscious does not easily eliminate the lost person from the survivor's dream world, just because the person is deceased.

Many Indigenous South Africans believe in ghosts or spirits. They believe too that it is important to die at home, because if the deceased is not buried in their traditional home, the spirit of the deceased is unable to communicate with the clan of the community (Mndende, 1997). It appears that the spirit of the deceased can influence a person's life positively though if the spirit is dissatisfied it may have a negative influence. It is imperative to revere the deceased since the deceased intermediate between the physical and the spiritual and have contact with the living. If a spirit is angered it can cause harm to the living (Bopape, 1996; Kasiram & Partab, 2002; Mndende, 1997) and there are two ways in which the spirits can be angered. The first is, if the living or the survivors do not carry out the ancestral sacrifices and ceremonies expected of them and the second is if the values and norms of the clan of the community are disrespected or disobeyed in some or other way (The introduction to ethnology, Intec 1990).

Death has additionally been viewed as *transposed* and *insulated* according to the modern approach of Kastebaum and Aisenberg (cited in Palgi & Abramovitch, 1984, p. 403). The term 'transposed' is used to describe the phenomena that death is equated with the aged and is only a remote possibility for the youth. However, in South Africa young people are dying at an alarming rate from violence, crime and AIDS (Demmer, 2004; Dixon, 2002; Kasiram & Partab, 2002), making death very real to them. Death does not respect or consider age. In fact, death does not distinguish between young or old, rich or poor. It strikes indiscriminately. Death is also seen as insulated because death is "the business of specialists whose work is largely behind the scenes" (Palgi & Abramovitch, 1984, p.403). However, research conducted on the Bapedi Framework of Mourning by Bopape (1995) refutes this view. Her research states that the corpse is brought to the house the eve of the burial, where it is 'doctored' along with the coffin, and kept overnight with the family. It appears that death is not insulated in some indigenous African cultures in South Africa.

Jack Goody's conceptual aspect of death considers death as the key focus around which human culture has developed. It is believed that the tools by which we recreate past ideologies of death include; "reflections of priest, poet, and philosopher; the Will and spiritual testament; and the analysis of grave, goods and tombstones" (Eisenbruch, 1984a, p.317). According to Palgi & Abramovitch (1984) Goody's work builds a natural social bridge between life and death and this social bridge seems to be the foundation of some African beliefs concerning death (Bopape, 1995). Funeral ceremonies are seen as "the means by which the actual passage of a human being from the land of the living to the land of the dead is affected" (Eisenbruch, 1984a, p.397).

Funeral rituals and ceremonies

Death ceremonies, rituals and funerals are valuable and therapeutic for the survivors (Rosenblatt et al, 1976). These Rituals and ceremonies may take place weeks, months or even years after the death. Ceremonies seem to serve to both renew and reinforce ties (Gorer, 1965; Rosenblatt et al, 1976). Powel (1981) defines the term "funeral" as "a ritual of termination, a time to show respect, to say goodbye and honour the dead" (p.91). He adds that funerals help one to accept the death of a loved one and appears to be therapeutic, emotional and spiritually beneficial for the bereaved. Funeral rituals also reveal the history and social relations of the deceased.

According to Van Gennep (1960), death ceremonies are considered to be rites of passage and serve as ceremonies of disconnection and incorporation. When the deceased leaves the world of the living and enters the symbolic world of the dead, the roles and the status of the survivors change. It is believed that the survivors must disconnect with the vital role they played and the status they held with the deceased and incorporate themselves into a new role. For example, when a wife loses her husband, she is no longer a wife but has become a widow and now has a new role, a new identity and a new status as a widow.

As early as the thirteenth century the demonstration of mourning became ritualized and therefore lost its spontaneity. Mourning is defined by Rosenblatt et al (1976) as "the culturally defined acts that are visually performed when death occurs" (p.2). Until the seventeenth century, professional mourners were employed by the family after the death of a loved one. These professional mourners imposed a period of privacy on the family, thereby

allowing them to protect the bereaved persons' grief from the world. The privacy also helped the bereaved to grieve intensely and prevent them from forgetting the departed too soon.

By the nineteenth century, the physical seclusion had become voluntary and had shifted to a moral level too. The idea of seclusion made mourning a right to demonstrate one's grief. Lou Taylor 1983(cited in Eisenbruch 1984a) recorded that by the middle of the nineteenth century in Britain, bereaved woman were afraid of the stigmatized shame that followed if they failed to carry out the etiquette of a death in the appropriate way. According to current studies of widows and widowers in present day Britain, Gorer (1965) declares that the customs of deep mourning and partial social seclusion have practically disappeared in England, however they are still observed by at least one third of Scottish mourners.

Public mourning seemed to add to the stress of grieving, since funerals that were conducted on Sundays by the working class were condemned by society as it was regarded as desecration of the Sabbath. The burials of the poor were also often delayed due to the far distance people had to travel and the shortage of funds, much like those who are poverty stricken today in South Africa. The worst dishonour was a pauper burial, paid for by the local parish since it apparently brought disgrace upon the deceased family and the community. The disgrace and dishonour experienced eventually led to the coming of ethnic groups to conduct their burials in a culturally-appropriate way (Eisenbruch, 1984a).

The transformation of funeral rites also occurred as a result of the First World War. The violent upheaval of war exposed a dominant mourning practice of the West and therefore encouraged the transformation of the social process of mourning and of grief. It seems that survivors of the war abandoned the rituals of wearing full ritual mourning wear and the style of restricted behaviour.

Evidence reveals that not all mourning practices are unified (Eisenbruch, 1984a; & Parry & Ryan1995). Exploratory research by Braun & Nichols (1997) on dying and grieving amongst four Asian American populations, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese and Filipino, specify differences in burial and bereavement traditions. For instance, Chinese and Vietnamese Americans wear white at funerals, with the Vietnamese also wearing a piece of black fabric pinned on the clothing to indicate mourning. Filipino Americans, similarly to Americans of European and British descent, wear black when a family member dies. These findings did not

specify which colour is worn for the bereaved Japanese American (Braun & Nichols, 1997; Gorer, 1965).

In the past century, it appears that upon the death of a loved one the corpse was placed in a coffin showing a Western standard of burial. The corpse was also kept in the home until the burial, whereas these days the corpse goes to the morgue until the day of the burial or until the eve of the burial (Bopape, 1995; Eisenbruch, 1984a).

It seems that each ethnic group has developed a set of mourning practices that best meet its needs at the time of a death, and according to Eisenbruch (1984a) this concept should be understood and acknowledged. He further states that by obstructing these practices, one can disrupt the necessary grieving process. In addition, Eisenbruch (1984a) states that it is important to have a knowledge and understanding of the different cultures grieving since that would enable one to recognize when individuals from other ethnic groups are demonstrating atypical grief (Eisenbruch, 1984a). An ethnic group, as defined by Schermerhorn (1978) is “a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry” (cited by Eisenbruch, 1984a, p. 324). In South Africa, some ethnic groups have shared historical and customary traditions that appear to encompass both the meaning of death and the way in which the individual in society deals with their bereavement (Bopape, 1995; Mndende, 1997).

According to Eisenbruch (1984a), the problem in ascribing a bereaved person to a particular ethnic group is that there could in fact be variation in the mourning process within a cultural group. Research specifies that tradition and culture determine the particular ceremonies and rituals that are to be performed (Kasiram & Partab 2002; Rosenblatt et al 1976). For example, Parry and Ryan (1995) stated that in the Muslim faith, the body of the deceased is washed by a same sex family member and is buried the same day within two intervals of prayers. According to Braun & Nichols (1997), the Chinese Americans do not move the body for eight hours after the individual passed away, burn symbolic paper money for the use in the deceased's next life, and hold memorial services for the deceased every seven days for forty nine days.

Further cultural determination of rituals can be seen in the Japanese Americans burial practices. They seem to prefer cremation over burial and participate in rituals to honour the dead ancestors. They also hold services every seven days for seven weeks, with additional

memorial services held after a hundred days, one year, three years and seven years thereafter. According to Bopape (1995), The Bapedi people of South Africa bury their deceased in what they call a freshly “doctored” grave (p.265), and are comforted through observing various mourning rituals during the eve of the burial. The Bapedi people also believe that if burial rituals are not carried out correctly, then the spirit of the deceased will not be incorporated into the spiritual world and will continue in an aimless existence (Bopape, 1995).

Eisenbruch, (1984b) declares that if rituals are not adhered to, it could create confusion, guilt and fear. Van Gennep (1960) further states that the most ‘dangerous dead’ are the deceased who have had no rites performed, because it is believed the deceased would like to reincorporate themselves back into the world of the living and since they cannot their conduct is that of hostility. It therefore seems that it is vital for rituals and ceremonies to be performed.

The loss of a loved person is one of the most intensely painful experiences any human being can suffer. Not only is it painful to experience but it is also painful to witness, if only because we are so impotent to help

John Bowlby

Grief

The loss of a loved one precipitates grief. The definition of loss according to the prominent medical model could be defined as “an event that produces persisting inaccessibility on an emotionally important figure” (Weiss, 1988, p. 38). Grief, it seems, is the emotional component of the bereavement process and includes specific emotional and behavioural responses. Grief is a form of “extreme sadness” according to the Collins Cobuild Essential English Dictionary (p.343). Freud, the father of psychology, claimed that grief was a normal process of reconstructing an inner world without the lost object (Averill, 1968). It appears that “losses are retrievable and the behavioural responses that make up part of the grieving process are geared towards to re-establishing a relationship with the lost object” (Worden, 1983, p.9). Collectively, it is believed that there is an almost universal attempt to regain the lost object. According to Engel 1961(cited in Worden, 1983), grief is represented as an illness or a departure from a state of health and wellbeing, and that the process of mourning is

similar to the process of healing. Grief, from a systems perspective, could be defined as “a transactional process involving the deceased and the survivors in a shared life cycle that acknowledges both the finality and the continuity of life” (Walsh & Mcgoldrick, 1991, p.1). A theoretical analysis of grief will be provided below and thereafter the determinants and behaviour of grief according to the biological, psychological and cultural perspectives will be highlighted. Finally, the universality of grief will be discussed.

A Theoretical Analysis of Grief

Mourning and Melancholia

Freud’s psychoanalytical theory of mourning is one of the earliest studies on grief. Freud’s view with regard to bereavement is noted in his 1917 paper *Mourning and Melancholia* (Averill, 1968). According to Freud, grief is a normal reaction to a loss. The experience of grief generally follows a normal path, but it could lead to severe psychological consequences if the bereaved fails to detach from the deceased (Averill, 1968). It seems that people develop attachment or love towards others who are important to them (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987.) Freud claimed that when a person dies, the bereaved person has to fight to sever the tie and detach the libidinal (love energy) that has been invested in the deceased. A healthy recovery depends on the successful severing of these emotional ties (Averill, 1968). In order to understand Freud’s concept of grief, one needs to grasp the assumptions of his psychoanalytic theory and its various concepts.

Freud saw the individual as consisting of three separate aspects; namely the id, the ego and the superego. They function together to ensure the survival of the individual (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1992, p.42). The id is the “innate primitive component of the psyche and is in direct contact with the body from which it inhibits energy for all forms of behaviour” (p.42). The ego develops from the id and is shaped through the individual’s contact with the outside world’ and serves the id’s needs. The superego functions within the person as a representative of society’s moral codes (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1992).

Freud described how mourning and depression involve a forced withdrawal of object cathexis. For example, libidinal energy (physical energy) is emotionally attached to or cathected to important persons or objects. If the cathected object is lost (loss of a loved one)

the libidinal ties must be broken through the detachment (or decaathexis) of this physical energy. Since the withdrawal is involuntary, it is therefore experienced as a painful process against which the ego protests. The ego denies the loss when a loved one dies and endeavours to place within its grasp a substitutive object, whether real or imaginary. Averill (1968) claimed that for the survivor to decaathexis the physical energy that they had invested in the deceased person, they are required to assess reality.

However, in contemporary society, research findings from the Tubingen Longitudinal Study, and those conducted on the experiences of widows and widowers revealed that ties are not always broken with the deceased (Storebe, Gergen, Stroebe & Gergen, 1992). The authors further observe that:

“The empirical reality is that people do not relinquish their ties to the deceased, withdraw their Cathexis or “let them go.” What occurs for survivors is a transformation from what had been a relationship operating on several levels of actual, symbolic, internalized and imagined relatedness to one in which the actual (“living and breathing”)relationship has been lost but the other forms remain or may even develop in more elaborate forms”.

(p.1209)

Watson (2004) criticized Freud’s theory, because he alleged that the theory constituted one of clinical observations and that Freud’s explanation of how one could work through one’s grief work was not useful. Grief work is a term derived from Freud’s psychoanalytical theory and is defined as “the process of freeing oneself from the bondage of the deceased, readjusting to the environment without the deceased and re-investing in another relationship” (Worden, 1983, p.10). Watson (2004) alleged that the attachment theories were not useful because they do not suggest what the bereaved individual can do to detach themselves from their loved ones.

It appears that the attachments the mourner has with the deceased are presumed to be severed through a labour of memory. Each and every memory and expectation in which “the libido is bound to the object is brought up and is hypercathexed and the detachment of the libido is accomplished” (Averill, 1968, p. 730). Freud thought the psychological function of grief was to free the individual of his or her ties to the deceased, and by evaluating the past and

reflecting upon the memories of the deceased, a gradual detachment would be achieved (Stroebe, Gergen, Stroebe & Gergen, 1992).

Thus it appears that the work of mourning involves a kind of fixated recollection during which the survivors revives the existence of the lost object by replacing the actual absence with an imaginary presence. The so-called restoration of the lost object (the deceased) helps the mourner to assess the value of the relationship and to realize what he or she has lost in losing the loved one. By reviving the lost object in memory, it seems that the mourner attempts to reclaim a part of the self that has been projected onto the lost object (Averill, 1968). Freud 1917 (cited in Averill, 1968) believed that losing a loved one destroys the mourner's imaginary psyche, since the mourners self-image depends on a relation eternal to the self. To acknowledge the loss of the loved one, therefore involves the mourner recognizing the loss of an attribute of the self, which is part of the mourner's sense of identity (Averill, 1968). This may account for the bereaved often testifying that they feel as though a part of them has died.

Watson (2004) criticized Freud's theory for his assumption that mourning came to a decisive end when the mourner severed the emotional attachment to the lost one and reinvested the free libido in a new object. It seems that a feeling of restoration for the bereaved depends upon abandoning the emotional ties with the lost object and rejecting the lost loved one. It appeared too that the bereaved must also incorporate the loss to a comforting substitute. Through this 'restoration' the self is restored and the work of mourning is supposed to be brought to a decisive end.

Freud did however admit that his theory lacked the explanation as to why mourners may cling to lost objects and, in what sense they remained tied to them. He noted that working through a loss did not mean that one abandoned the object and reinvested in a new one, but rather he suggested that somehow grief work may well be an interminable labour that is never completed (Averill, 1968). However the Freudian Model of grief is a popular one, and is extensively used to evaluate narrative representations of death, loss and bereavement (Watson, 2004).

Attachment theory

Bowlby expanded upon Freud's idea of attachment and focused on external relationships that exist between infants and parents. He was renowned for all his work on attachment and especially so for his famous Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973), and the first theorist to base any conclusions on observed evidence. Worden, (1983) stated that Bowlby studied how the intensity of grief may be influenced by the type of attachment one had with the deceased. His attachment theory provides a means for people to understand the strong bonds of affection that individuals make with each other and the intense emotional reaction individuals have when these bonds are broken. The aim of attachment behaviour is to maintain a bond of affection and any danger to this bond will give rise to very precise behaviour such as crying and clinging (Parkes, 1999; Worden, 1983).

According to Bowlby 1971, 1975, 1980 (cited in Stroebe, Gergen, Stoebe, & Gergen, 1992), grief is conceptualized as a form of separation anxiety and the aim is to retrieve or restore the proximity to the lost object. Bowlby noticed during his research with children the effect that separation had on children when they were separated from their parents. He categorized the separation into three different phases, namely the protest phase, the despair phase and the detachment phase (Bowlby, 1973)

It seems that there are many good biological explanations regarding why for every separation, the response is automatic, instinctive and aggressive in nature. Through the course of evolution, behavioural responses of grieving became geared towards re-establishing a relationship with the lost object (Bowlby, 1973; Worden, 1983). Bowlby (1973) claimed that attachments stemmed more from a need for security and safety and not because of certain biological drives that must be met (Worden, 1983).

Bowlby, (cited in Worden, 1983) identified how certain circumstances surrounding the death of a loved one could affect the characteristics, intensity and duration of the bereavement process. His grief theory explained a cycle of phases the bereaved person experienced, the grief reactions and the time to reach recovery.

During the initial phase of grief bereaved people experience a sense of numbness and shock, and may show outbursts of extreme intense distress or anger. In this phase the bereaved is

unable to fully comprehend the impact of the death. In the second phase the bereaved protests the loss, and searches and yearns for the deceased to return. This stage triggers crying, anxiety, self-reproach, confusion and loss of security (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987). During the third phase, as the bereaved learns to live without the deceased, intense despair is experienced.

Parkes' analysis of grief

Parkes built on past theories, to devise a new conceptualized grief experience. Parkes, a student and colleague of Bowlby, also viewed grief from an evolutionary perspective. He believed that “grief is not itself a unitary and universal phenomenon but is derived from the interactions of several components which are themselves universal” (Parkes, 2000, p. 323). His assumptions were as follows;

- *All social animals make and maintain attachments which are necessary for survival.
- *It is in the nature of attachments that they resist severance. If a threat is perceived to the attachment (separation), neuro-physiological arousal occurs and behavioural inclinations (crying and searching) begin to achieve a reunion with the separated object.
- *Attachments have high survival – value, attachment behaviours take priority over other tendencies.
- *If the set goal of the behaviour is not accomplished, the behaviour will gradually diminish and the person becomes open to other attachments.

Parkes conducted research on bereavement in America and Europe. He conceptualized grief as a succession of transferring phases that are present for a time, but fade in and out and peak, then giving way to the next phase (Parkes & Weiss, 1983). Parkes and Weiss (1983) conducted research on bereaved widows, and observed that grief was depicted as an active multi-faceted range of emotions. They recorded many determinants of the experience of grief, namely the type of loss, the uniqueness of the bereaved and the circumstances determined the grief experience. Parkes also classified the process of grief into various phases. These phases were numbness, pinning, disorganization and despair and recovery. His conceptualization of

grief helped explain how it could be felt long after the loss of the loved object (Parkes & Weiss, 1983).

Worden's four tasks of mourning

Worden (1983) alleged that it is important to express one's grief and detach emotionally from the deceased to recover full function. Worden stated that all human growth and development is influenced by various tasks. Mourning (the adaptation to loss) also involved accomplishing certain tasks. Since mourning was viewed as a process and not a state, the tasks implied 'grief work', or the work of freeing oneself from the bondage of the deceased, readjusting to the environment without the deceased and re-investing in another relationship (Worden, 1983, p.10).

Worden's four tasks of mourning are as follows;

Task 1: To Accept the Reality of the Loss. To come to full reality that the person is dead and that a reunion is impossible.

Task 2: To Experience the pain of grief. It is important to acknowledge and to work through the pain and not to cut off ones feelings and deny the pain.

Task 3: To adjust to an Environment in which the deceased is missing. The bereaved must develop skills to cope and redefine the loss in a way that it will benefit the survivor.

Task 4: To Withdraw Emotional Energy and Reinvest it in Another Relationship. The final stage of grieving is to withdraw emotionally from the deceased so that the emotional energy may be invested in a new relationship.

(p. 11-16)

Worden, (1983) declared that mourning was finished when the four task of mourning were completed and when the person "can reinvest his or emotions back into life and in the living" (p.16). However he did add that "there is a sense that mourning can be finished and there is a sense in which mourning is never finished" (p.17).

The Apperception Theory of grief

Watson (2004) explains how we perceive a crisis like the death of a loved one in terms of our pre-existing knowledge, and that we are able to adapt to the crisis by learning new

perceptions. The word 'apperception' refers to the ability to make sense of new material by interpreting it in terms of one's existing concepts, languages, beliefs and theories. Watson (2004) uses the word 'apperception' synonymously with the term 'world-image'

Watson (2004) alleged that we meet a learning opportunity every time the real world changes. For instance, when we experience a major loss we must update our world-image to correspond to the new reality so that we can continue our lives again. Grief is a *change* in our lives that allows us to mature and it gives us the opportunity to continue to learn and mature. Maturing comprises a process of continually updating our world image to incorporate the new challenges made on us.

It appears that our world image resembles a map, and when we are going through the grieving process we keep updating our world image by redrawing our internal map of the world. It appears that we need to constantly pay attention to what is really true and to test our own personal reality against what a more objective reality. Hence, using substances like alcohol and drugs or even mythical beliefs will distort our perception of the reality of the death and we will not properly recover from our loss (Watson, 2004).

According to Watson (2004), the observations of Freud and Bowlby's 'attachment' theory may have been helpful for clinical work. These observations indicated that grief was not an illness, but rather an adaption to loss; that the bereaved person must face and accept the loss; and finally, if grieving were to be successful it required hard work – "grief work". However, Watson (2004) alleged that Freud's explanation of what happens during grief work was unhelpful. It appeared that Watson believed that one does not detach oneself from a lost loved one, but rather perceives them differently, meaning that one can still remain bonded with the deceased for many years to come after their passing.

It seems that we define ourselves (self-image) in terms of internal processes such as our thoughts, feelings, memories and so forth. When we bond with others through internalization, we incorporate them into our world-image. Through bonding with others we also experience sense of intimacy with them. When this bond is severed, a part of our self-image is ripped from us and it is painful to us. We become numb and feel 'dead' ourselves (Watson, 2004).

When we experience a loss, we need to update our world-image since our world has now changed. We apparently deny our loss, because our mental map still includes our lost one on our map and our senses still confirm their presence on our map. It appears that once the denial abates, we even think that we can hear them or see them. It seems that emotional distress is caused by the gap between 'what is' and 'what we expect'. According to Watson (2004), grief work involves closing this gap, which we do by redrawing our now incorrect world-image to match our awareness of the real world as it is. It appears that when the gap has been closed, the grieving process can be regarded as having been successful. However, if we do not redraw our world-image to match reality then grieving can have serious consequences (Watson, 2004).

The Determinants of Grief

Biological context

The occasion for grief from a biological context is the loss of relationship and separation. Relationships that trigger grief are termed relationship attachments. These relationships are known as bound relationships, for example parental attachment to children, and spousal attachment. According to Weiss (1988), the death of a child, spouse or parent tends to be followed by years of grief. The death of friends, colleagues or siblings that live in different households, tend to be followed by distress and sadness but not by the same severe or persisting grief that follows the loss of parent or spouse (p.38). Therefore the relationship and the nature of the attachment a person has with others will determine how the person will grieve if these attachments were to be severed (Weiss, 1988).

According to Bowlby (1973), 'attachments' begin at infancy and continue throughout life. The attachment behaviour that is formed at infancy seems to help shape the attachment relationship one has as an adult. Attachment and exploration systems are the core of Bowlby's attachment theory.

It appears that an infant will first establish a strong attachment with its primary caregiver. When a baby is born, a strong bond develops between infant and mother and is intensified as the baby grows as it is generally the mother who is the primary caregiver. The loss of this

relationship, such as the mother losing a child would increase the intensity of the mother's grief far more than if she were to lose an aged grandmother for instance.

Relationships and the nature of an attachment are important factors for the bereaved. Worden (1983) alleged that "the "intensity of grief" is determined by the "intensity of love" (p.29). For instance, to lose a spouse is to lose a person with whom one had a strong bond with, a deep love for and many years of investment in the relationship, which would evoke a sense of extreme, intense grief. However, if one loses a grandmother whom one has no or little contact with, the response may not be that intense. It therefore appears that relationships and the nature of attachments are relevant to the psychological aspect of grieving.

Psychological context

The psychological aspects of grief integrate unusual historical and current circumstances of each person, together with the cultural and biological determinants. The experience of grief is related to the developmental stage and the various conflict issues of the individual involved. According to Worden (1993), there are however significant determinants of grief that fall into six categories. These categories are as follows:

Who the person was is a vital factor when predicting how one will respond to a loss. A spouse will be mourned more deeply than a grandparent, and a distant cousin may be mourned with less intensity than one would mourn the loss of a child.

The nature of attachment has been discussed under the subheading 'biological context'. Weiss (1988) characterizes "relationships whose loss produces grief as attachments". (p.40). He defines four relational bonds that are important and have similar characteristics as "the relationship that bond children to parents" (p.40). He defines these relational bonds as such: *pair bond*, which is the relationship between married people or couples; *parent investment*, which is seen in the parent and child relationship, *transference*, which is the bond of clients and patient forms to professionals; and lastly *persistence of childhood attachment into adulthood* (Weiss, 1988, p.41). The closeness of any of these bonds will determine the severity of grief, and thus the nature of attachment to the deceased is a very important factor. The strength of the attachment is vital because the intensity of grief is determined by the intensity of love. The security of the relationship is also fundamental in determining grief.

That is, if the deceased was necessary for the survival or wellbeing of the survivor it may have impact the survivor's grief (Worden, 1983). Another factor that will determine grief is whether there was any conflict between the deceased and bereaved. Ambivalence in a relationship may also have an effect on grieving. That is, a highly ambivalent relationship may stir an awful amount of guilt. What the relationship was of the deceased to the survivor is also a determinant of grief, for instance the death of a grandmother is different to the death of a spouse (Parkes, 1996; Worden, 1983).

The mode of death tells one how the survivor will grieve. Deaths are categorized under the NASH heading, namely natural, accident, suicidal and homicidal. A natural death of an elderly person is grieved differently to the accidental death of a young child. The death of a father by suicide is grieved differently to the death of a mother who leaves young children behind (Worden, 1983). Factors like where the death occurred and the particular circumstances surrounding the death play an important role too. For instance a sudden death could be shocking to the survivor and could therefore obstruct grief. The bereaved experiences shock, a sense of helplessness and disbelief and these factors therefore hamper grief (Parkes & Weiss, 1983). Sudden death can also evoke insecurity and can affect grieving. Often there may be unfinished business between the deceased and the bereaved and there may have been no time to say goodbye. It appears that violence violation and volition are elements of unnatural dying and could induce prolonged traumatic bereavement (Worden, 1983).

Historical antecedents help in predicting how a person is going to grieve. It seems that if there were previous losses one would need to know how the previous loss was grieved and whether the previous loss was successfully grieved. Research indicates that multiple losses may make a survivor feel more vulnerable or helpless when they experience further losses. Research conducted on troops who suffered casualties over a long period, were found to suffer from depression and showed a disinterest and a fear to establish new relationships, fearing the new attachments would be severed too (Parkes & Weiss, 1983). According to Parkes (1996), the previous mental health of the bereaved is relevant too, since a prior depressive illness could complicate grief.

Personality variables that determine grief include the age, sex and the inhibitions of the bereaved. Age is a demographic factor that can influence the expression of grief. Widows

and widowers under the age of forty seem to be at a greater risk of pathological advances than older widowers and widows (Parks & Weiss, 1983). Rosenblatt et al (1976) conducted a study which focused on exploring the differences between the grieving of women and men. Men appear to cry less in their bereavement than woman and woman seem to self mutilate more than men do. Men also seem to show more anger than what woman show. Further, the survivor's attitude towards death itself, as well as their character determines their ability to cope with emotional distress. One's ability to handle stress and anxiety also seems to play a major role in the grieving process. According to Worden (1983) research indicates people with personality disorders do not handle losses very well.

Social variables also play a role in determining how one is going to grieve. Ethnic and religious subcultures provide guidelines and rituals for grieving. For instance, funeral practices and mourning practices are shaped and defined by ones ethnicity and religion. Since grief is regarded a social process for many people it should therefore be settled within a social setting in which people can support each other during the time of mourning. It appears that the amount of social support one receives during bereavement, plays a vital role in the outcome of grief (Kasiram & Partab, 2002), and that bereaved people who are socially supported and encouraged in the initiation and termination of the grieving process are less likely to suffer pathological reactions (Parks, 1996; Rosenblatt, 1988; Stroebe & Stroebe,1987). While low socioeconomic circumstances may provide an added stressor in the form of financial difficulties, research indicates that social class does not necessarily determine or alter the way a person may grieve (Parks & Weiss, 1983; Worden, 1983).

Cultural context

Culture is a vital aspect of our identity, our values, norms and beliefs and it encompasses every facet of our lives. Grief as an emotion is implicated and embedded in a social, historical and political situation as constructed by a person. It seems that different societies develop their own beliefs, values, ceremonies and rituals regarding death and bereavement (Rosenblatt et al, 1976). The reaction to death is then determined by how death has been assimilated into a given culture. According to Rosenblatt (1988), the experience of an emotion will depend on how an individual interprets a particular social situation. This experienced emotion appears to play a key role in changing and transforming the character of

social situations since it allows a new understanding or interpretation of the situation to emerge. It also seems to motivate the individual to engage in certain actions.

The Symbolic Interaction theory, according to Rosenblatt (1988), emphasizes the social nature of reality and states that an important loss is actually a loss of reality. From this viewpoint grief is defined as ‘arising not only because of a loss of a person but also because of losing part of the foundation for dealing with the loss and with all of experience’ (p.68). When we experience a death it thus seems that a part of the social context for understanding, organizing, validating and defining feelings, actions, values and priorities is removed when a significant person is lost (Rosenblatt, 1988).

Although Rosenblatt et al (1976) stated that there may be cultural similarities in grieving it appears that there are cultural differences in how loss is defined and in what may be considered an appropriate expression of grief. Culture therefore seems to determine the social context of bereavement. Culture shapes and defines one’s reaction to death and prescribes how the bereaved should grieve.

The religious and cultural connotation of grieving and bereavement was explored in a previous section under the heading of ‘death’. It was, however, noted how pivotal religion was in determining the rituals and ceremonies one would perform at the loss of a loved one. Additionally, religion determines one’s beliefs concerning death and the after-life and therefore religion could determine and influence one’s response to death as well as one’s mourning behaviour.

Bereavement Behaviour

A biological Perspective

According to Engel 1961 (cited in Worden, 1983) grief may be regarded as a disease and is caused by the loss of an object (loved one) and is seen as a syndrome which has predictable symptoms. From a biological perspective, grief signifies that one has ill health, and just as physiologically healing is necessary to restore and balance one’s body’s equilibrium, so too must the bereaved be restored. Mourning is therefore seen as a ‘process of healing’ (Worden, 1983, p.10).

Grief from a biological perspective is manifested as various feelings, physical sensations, behaviours and cognitions. Parkes and Weiss (1983) in a follow up to their American Harvard Bereavement study on widows and widowers noted differences between the bereaved widows and widowers and non-bereaved interviewees'. The bereaved individuals displayed autonomic symptoms such as trembling, twitching, pain in the chest, and heart palpitations. They also displayed emotional distress such as shock, denial, crying, sadness, anxiety, insomnia, restlessness, yearning, numbness, despair, anger and a loss of appetite, as compared to the non-bereaved who did not display these symptoms.

According to Averill, (1968) Rosenblatt et al, (1976) Worden, (1983) and Parkes & Weiss, (1983), the physical sensations that are commonly experienced, are tightness in the chest, a dry mouth, breathlessness, weakness in their muscles and a hollow sensation in the stomach, while thought patterns such as disbelief, confusion, preoccupation, and a sense of presence and hallucinations may be present. They all note that the specific behaviours associated with grief are sleep disturbances, appetite disturbances, absentminded behaviour, social withdrawal, crying, dreaming of the deceased and treasuring objects that had belonged to the deceased.

Rosenblatt et al (1976) conducted a conceptual survey on grief and mourning in 78 cultures in America with the assumption that grief in other societies resembled grief in America. It appears that they were able to trace cultural similarities in their study of the expression of emotion in bereavement. They found that crying was present for some bereaved people in 72 of the 73 societies studied. The Balinese people though, showed no crying in bereavement since their culture does not permit crying. Anger and aggression were present in 50 of the 66 societies that responses were rated and were noted to be more prevalent in the non-Western societies. Rosenblatt et al (1976) concluded that anger may have been hidden. Though anger and aggression were present in 50 of the 66 societies, it cannot be assumed that the anger and aggression that were revealed were purely the result of bereavement, nor can it be concluded that since there was no outward show of anger and aggression, they had been hidden.

Amongst the findings of the study of Rosenblatt et al (1976) there were also gender differences in emotions during bereavement. Women tended to cry more easily and to self-mutilate more than men did, while men tended to be less expressive with crying and to direct

their anger and aggression away from themselves. Anger and aggression may be sanctioned and even expected in bereavement, though it is alleged that certain activity conducted by ritual specialists (such as instruction, care, and assistance) could minimize the tendency towards anger and aggression.

It was reported that Europeans and Americans seemed to cry less than non-Western people and are unemotional in bereavement. Averill 1968 and Marris 1958, 1974 (cited in Rosenblatt et al 1976) thought that women could have 'greater attachments' than what men have (p.25). Linked to the above research on crying, is the intense crying told by an Afrikaans South African woman, Amore Bekker, who narrated her account of her personal loss in the *Sarie* magazine (2010). She described how much she cried and how parched her crying made her. She said 'maar ek huil baie, ek huil myself dors' (p. 172).

Lovell, Hemmings and Hill (1993) conducted a study on bereavement reactions between 40 Swazi and 40 Scots women, where they found there were differences in styles of mourning and in the intensity in grief responses. In Scotland mourning is a private affair and the bereaved avoids embarrassed others until her grieving is over. The idea is to 'get over it' as soon as possible. The Swazi woman wails intensely and the bereaved is encouraged to mourn. Crying is intense the eve of the funeral. Research indicates that not only are there gender differences, but that cultural beliefs have an influence on grief reactions too (Brison & Levitt, 1995; Rosenblatt et al 1976.)

The process of grief is thought to have various stages. However, there is no definite consensus on how many stages an individual goes through during their grieving process. Some authors state that grief has three stages, namely shock and disbelief, intense grief, and a period of recovery (Gorer, 1965; Averril, 1968, cited in Santrock, 1997). Parkes and Weiss on the other hand suggest that the following four stages comprise the process of grief: numbness, yearning, disorganization and despair and lastly reorganized behaviour (Santrock, 1997).

According to Worden (1983), the term 'task' was more appropriate in defining the various stages of the grieving process. He defined four tasks of mourning, namely accepting the reality of the loss, experiencing the pain of grief, adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing and finally to withdraw emotional energy and to invest it in another

relationship. These four tasks are identical to Lindemann's (1944) four tasks of mourning. These stages or tasks have however been devised by Western researchers, who have described these stages solely from a *Western* point of view, and assumptions should not be made that all cultural groups experience these stages/tasks alike (Eisenbruch, 1984 ; McKay, 1998).

The Mourning period is also controversial. Rosenblatt et al (1976) define the 'mourning period' as 'the culturally defined time or typical period during which the acts of mourning are conventionally performed' (p.2). It is believed that the grief period could take 1-12 months or longer (Santrock, 1997), and could even take up to two years or longer (Van Gennep, 1960). Van Gennep (1960) believed the length of the mourning period increased with the closeness of the social tie to the deceased. Parks & Weiss (1992) noted in their study of bereaved widows and widowers that it took up to thirteen months to recover, although for some participants the grieving period continued for 24 months.

Worden (1983) reported that mourning was completed when all the 'tasks' of mourning were accomplished. A "completed grief reaction is when the person is able think of the deceased without pain" (p. 16). However Bowlby (1980, p. 101) cited in Worden (1983) quoted a widow as saying that "mourning never ends". A popular magazine titled *Sarie*, published an article on grief, and included an interview that had been conducted with a woman named as Christine Wessels, who had lost her boyfriend. Wessels declared "Ek besef daar is geen manier om oor dit wat gebeur het te kom nie, nooit, nooit ooit nee" (p. 179). What Christine is saying is that there is no given way that she will be able to ever get over what happened to her (losing her loved one). The duration of grief seems to depend on a variety of factors such as how close the bereaved was to the deceased, how previous losses were handled, the social support given to the bereaved and the success at which the person does the 'grief work' (Park & Weiss, 1983), and as a result there is no set course for grief.

According to Eisenbruch (1984a), the way in which the individual has been socialized to explain, justify and reconcile the loss will assist the individual in working through his or her grief. A grief work model that is widely used is, according to Klaas (1999), not applicable cross-culturally since it is based upon a Western paradigm. Klaas (1999) proposed that a new model be developed that would be cross-culturally applicable. It appears that if one

successfully 'works through' one's grief it is alleged that pathologies or complications of grief will not follow (Worden, 1983).

Psychological Perspective

As mentioned earlier, grief is not a set of symptoms that start at the loss of a loved one and gradually fade away (Rosenblatt, 1988); rather, it entails "a succession of clinical pictures which blend into and replace one another" (Parks, 1986, p.27). Grief is a normal process, and sometimes it is referred to as uncomplicated grief. The word normal is 'clinically' defined by what the clinician calls normal mourning behaviour, whilst 'statistically' it refers to the frequency with which the behaviour is found among a randomized bereaved population. The more frequent the behaviour, the more it is defined as normal (Worden, 1983, p. 19).

Many people are able to cope with the reactions and processes described under the previous heading and thereby are able to work through their grief. However, some bereaved people are unable to resolve their feelings about their loss and thus ineffectively deal with the tasks of grieving. There are various factors that can determine how one grieves and there are certain factors that can influence the resolution of grieving. These factors have been discussed under the subheading 'psychological context'. However, if grief is not successfully resolved one may experience pathological grief.

It has been suggested that in order to diagnose pathological grief, one needs to see grief as running a course of phases since it is difficult to determine if the bereaved person is suffering from normal grief or pathological grief. Horowitz (1980, p. 1157) cited in Bailey & Gregg (1986) defines pathological grief as "the intensification of grief to the level where the person is overwhelmed, resorts to maladaptive behaviour, or remains interminably in a state without progression of the mourning process toward completion. It involves processes that do not move progressively toward assimilation or accommodation, but instead leads to stereotyped repetitions or extensive interruptions of healing". Pathological grief, according to Stroebe and Stroebe (1987), is "grief reactions which show a marked deviation from the normal pattern and are associated with maladjustments and psychiatric problems" (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987, p.17).

Lindemann 1944 studied acute grief reactions in bereaved individuals who had lost loved ones due to natural causes, disaster and war, and differentiated between normal and abnormal reactions in his observations. This was the first observed study on morbid grief, and he claimed that the delay in onset of grief was the most outstanding appearance of morbid grief (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987). During periods of delayed grief, the bereaved may alternate between normal behaviour and hostile behaviour which may signify a 'distorted picture' of the grief syndrome. The failure to work through grief seems to be the root of morbid grief (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987). Lindemann's work was a breakthrough that gave rise to clinical guidelines for abnormal grief reaction identification. It appeared that the successful outcome of grief was being free from the bondage to the deceased (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987).

However, Parkes (1965; cited in Stroebe & Storebe, 1987) criticized Lindemann for failing to provide a clear account of and the criteria for normal grief. Parks developed a classification of morbid grief reactions from his studies and other influential work (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987). He identified three forms of pathological reactions to grief, which are as follows:

- Chronic grief– An indefinite, prolonged grief that has intense symptoms, which are highly exaggerated compared to normal grief.
- Delayed grief– A chronic grief reaction occurring after an extensive delay during which the expression of grief is inhibited.
- Inhibited – According to Deutsch (1937) and Stern, Williams and Prados (1951) (cited in Stroebe & Stroebe 1987) most of the normal grief symptoms are absent. However, psychoanalysts believe that unresolved grief may be given expression in some form therefore the emotional disturbance of grief could likely be directed in somatic symptoms.

However, Parkes (1965; cited Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987) believed that inhibited and delayed grief were similar in character, since he did not note a significant difference between these two in his psychiatric patients'. It seems that pathological grief descriptions may be helpful in treating unresolved grief, yet they do not predict who of the bereaved are likely to be vulnerable to pathological grief or if one is actually suffering from pathological grief.

Beuster (1997) states that in the past, individuals in South Africa have been misdiagnosed as psychotic and have been institutionalized due to a lack of knowledge and understanding of

cultural beliefs and values. It appears that “beliefs and perceptions become psychotic only when they are at variance with the prevailing cultural norms” (p.6).

According to Beuster (1997) findings reveal that 60% of black patients (Indigenous South Africans) were misdiagnosed as schizophrenic when in fact their symptoms could be explained as ‘culture specific syndrome’. A ‘culture specific syndrome’ refers to a pathological state exclusive to a particular culture (Beuster, 1997). For example, a culture specific syndrome known as ‘Twasas’ amongst Indigenous South Africans is commonly misdiagnosed as schizophrenia. It is believed that the spirit of the deceased communicates to the individual whom is in a ‘Twasas’ state and this act of communication is often misdiagnosed as hallucinations by mental professionals. The recognition and understanding of various culturally appropriate grieving beliefs is thus vital, since it may prevent the misdiagnoses of the bereaved person.

Cultural Perspective

According to Averill (1968), every society possesses certain beliefs and customs concerning the appropriate behaviour to be displayed upon the death of a significant loved one which individuals follow. It appears that society and culture prescribe and define the situation in which such behaviour should be exhibited. Mourning and ceremony rituals are different in each society (Averill, 1968; p.26).

Durkheim (1976; cited in Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987) states that “mourning is not a natural movement of private feelings wounded by a cruel loss; it is a duty imposed by a group. One weeps, not simply because he is sad, but because he is forced to weep. It is a ritual attitude which he is forced to adopt out of respect for custom, but which is, in large measure, independent of his affective state” (p.7).

A bereaved person’s ethnicity is determined by who he says he is, what he does with whom and how he feels about it. According to Eisenbruch (1984a) “*behavioural ethnicity* means that the person has “learned distinctive values, beliefs, behavioural norms and language that serve as the basis of interaction within the group” (p. 324). *Ideological ethnicity* on the other hand is based on customs and belief systems that are not basic to the individual daily life. Some groups choose to identify with their ethnicity only in a time of a life crisis, such as

when a death occurs as well as when conducting certain mourning practices (Eisenbruch, 1984a). It appears differences in *behaviour ethnicity* will give rise to differences in the private experiences of grief.

The cultural aspect of the response to death is shaped by the beliefs and customs each society possesses. Cultures differ widely in how loss is defined and in what is considered an appropriate expression of grief and these cultural differences are reflected in what bereaved people say and do. Bereavement behaviour varies significantly from one society to the next, and the rituals that the majority of people perform while grieving feels real to them and their expression of emotion serves to validate the cultural rule system for grieving and becomes part of the context of grief for others around them (Rosenblatt, 1988).

An analysis of Wikan 1988 (cited in Stroebe, Gergen, Sroebe & Gergen, 1992) conveys the difference of the expression of grief in two Muslim societies in Bali and Egypt. Grief seems to be hindered in both societies however there are different ways in which they come to terms with their loss. The bereaved Muslims in Egypt are encouraged to express their grief and to dwell on their grief by surrounding themselves amongst others who have had similar experiences. They share their sorrow and tragic accounts of their loss and together mourn the deceased by perpetually mourning. Very little attempt is made to block memories or break ties with the loved one (p.1208). These behavioural expressions have been observed in Indigenous South Africans too (Mndende, 1997; Bopabe, 1996).

In Bali, it seems that the pattern of grieving in the Muslim culture is completely different. The bereaved are instructed to control their sorrow. They are even encouraged to be joyous and light hearted. To openly grieve and not show happiness is seen as an injustice to the others in the community. If the bereaved holds on to a bond with the deceased the bereaved person is critically and harshly judged. It was recited that a Balinese man who overtly showed his grief was stigmatized as mad and was ridiculed each time the incident was discussed (Stroebe et al, 1992).

Is Grief Universal?

Cultural variations on grief reactions have been studied collectively by anthropologists, and seem to be based on the ethnographic data of public rituals and mourning customs. It has been questioned as to whether emotional experiences are a subjective reflection of a bodily

state and if they are then it seems that grief could be regarded as a physiological driven emotional response that can actually be distinguished from the norm-governed public display of emotions in mourning (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987). However, according to Averill (1982, cited in Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987) it appears that grief and mourning may be socially composed response guides that are culturally specified.

Ekman 1971, cited in Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987) alleges that there are two probable means by which cultural factors may structure emotional experiences; namely *appraisal processes* and *feeling rules*. This assumption implies that it is cultural factors that determine whether an individual appraises a situation as being happy or sad in nature. However, there are disagreements among emotional theorists as to whether the emotional experience ensuing from the *appraisal* is simply an indication of cultural norms or *feeling rules*.

It appears that emotion is viewed as “a universal set of largely pre wired internal processes of self- maintenance and self- regulation” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p.235) thus one may assume that an emotional experience such as grief is universal and physiologically driven. However, anthropologists Rasaldo 1984 and Lutz 1988 (cited in Markus & Kitayama 1991) have both suggested that culture can play a central role in shaping emotion experiences and state that:

“Feelings’ are not substances to be discovered in our blood but social practices organized by stories that both enact and tell they are structured by our forms of understanding” (p.143).

Lutz 1988 (cited in Markus & Kitayama, 1991) further argued that emotions are viewed as universally experienced ‘natural’ human phenomena, but she contends that emotions “can be viewed as cultural and interpersonal products of naming, justifying and persuading by people in relationship to each other” (p.5). Emotional meaning can thus be viewed as a social rather than an individual attainment.

Yet, evidence of primate observational research by Mineka and Suomi 1978 (cited in Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987) indicated that grief is a characteristic response of many species to the loss of an attachment figure and may be independent of learning responses. It is declared that if

separation from the group cannot be avoided, appropriate reactions to return to the group will run its course and cause severe psychological and physiological distress (Averill, 1979).

The Proprioceptive-feedback theory of James-Lange states that our subjective emotional experience is patterned by the feedback from the activity of the organs of our body. This points out that our bodily information is the foundation of expressive behaviour and autonomic action. The quality of the experience of grief is established by the feedback from these physiological changes. Grief is thus viewed as the subjective manifestation of the feedback from changes in the state of the different bodily structures, such as facial muscles through crying (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987).

Stroebe and Stroebe (1987), however, alleged that facial muscles and other outward expressions of emotion are often influenced by social norms and that the voluntary control of one's facial expressions can shape the emotional expression, suggesting that cultural norms could influence one's emotional expression. It appears that the Proprioceptive-feedback theory has been criticized on the grounds that it is not possible to distinguish the different patterns of physiological changes and then link them with different emotions.

The Cognitive-arousal theory, which was tested by Schachter and Singer (1962), implies that emotions are patterned by cognitions rather than by the activity of bodily organs (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987). An emotional state is seen as the effect of the interactions of two particular components, namely the unspecific physiological arousal and the cognition about the arousing situation. The experience of grief would then be the result of an unspecific physiological arousal attributed to a loss. The individual will feel grief by interpreting the physiological arousal. However, our emotional states consist of different sets of responses and different individuals will likely have varying interpretations, which cannot be shaped into a singular intricate pattern (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987, p.30).

Averill, 1982 & Horshchild, 1979 (cited in Stroebe & Srtoebe, 1987) adopted a social constructionist approach to this theme, and believed that the way individuals interpret their arousal and their resulting feelings are guided by cultural norms or feeling rules. It is these social norms or feeling rules that prescribe what emotions are 'correct' for a given social situation. Grief and mourning are both regarded as culturally-composed response patterns and

it is the mourning rituals which offer important information about the emotional experiences of the bereaved.

Emotions are regarded as 'transitory social rules' and for an emotional response to be reckoned as a social rule, the meaning assigned to the emotional response must coincide with the social expectations and the individual's behaviour, is also expected to conform to the said social expectations (Averill, 1982 cited in Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987, p.31).

Averill and Nunley (1988), state that the most comprehensive unit in the social hierarchy is the society. Societies are divided into various social systems, for instance political, health and so forth, and are constituted by social roles. Because of the implications of death and loss on the survival of a society, certain roles have been developed for the individual who is in mourning to enact. These roles which are viewed in the mourning practices are related to religious and political systems. 'Mourning' can be experienced as a genuine emotional reaction and not a forced imposed dutiful emotional reaction. If the bereaved has socialized and internalized the relevant norms of its society, then grieving would not be a forced imposed duty, but rather a natural expression (p.85).

Klaas (1999) hoped to develop a concept of grief that could apply to all cultures. He quoted Irish, Lunquest, & Nelson (1993) as stating that "death and grief though they are universal occur within a social milieu and is deeply embedded with each person's reality" (p. 187). Klaas made a distinction between a cross-cultural and multi-cultural model of grief. According to Klaas (1999), a cross-cultural model of grief would be a meta-model and would have a "set of concepts by which we could understand and compare the ways different cultures explain the response to death; and by which we could understand and compare the ways individuals and communities respond to death in different cultures" (p.154). Multicultural refers to an amalgamation or composite of cultural forms that originate in more than one culture. He stated that grief has 'variations' in different cultures (p.154).

Barley 1997 (cited in Klaas, 1999) alleged that grief is not universal, and stated that there "is no such thing as grief, except as a Western cultural construct" (p.162). He believed that death is so entwined in our multifaceted cultural worlds that it was impossible to "grasp its meaning or the culturally prescribed ways of responding to death in universal terms" (p.161). Barley

rejected the modern concept of grief in understanding the way people respond to death from other cultures (Klaas, 1999).

Klaas's (1999) assertion that the response to death is so interwoven in the tapestry of life that it is near unachievable to separate one particular strand and call it grief can be linked to Barley's statement. Smith 1962 (cited in Klaas 1999) experienced the same dilemma in his studies of religion, and stated that "religion may be a core element of a person's life and culture but that does not imply there is a generic religious truth, or a religious system that can be formulated into an observable pattern theoretically abstractable from the persons who live it" (p.55)

Klaas (1999) proposed that the same thinking should apply to our view of grief. He states that there may be no 'grief', only 'griefs'. He proclaims that "Grief may not be a separate entity but something that touches many aspects of our inner and our social life" (p.174). It seems that we should not separate this one thing and call it grief.

Klaas (1999) also maintained that to search for the universal, we should continue along an avenue that would enable us to understand human experiences instead of constructing a concept that could hamper our understanding. It is recommended that we study grief along the same lines as Smith studied religion. In other words, we must first understand our own traditions and experiences of death and grief and then we must understand one or more traditions other than our own in regards to death and grief. Klaas (1999, p. 174) explains this further, by stating that;

"We not only need to accept that other people may see things differently, we also need to accept that the way they see their world and even the way they see us, may be useful in seeing ourselves. More clearly the 'we' that knows death can be as multi - cultural as the 'others' we seek to serve"

Conclusion

This chapter displayed the researcher's conception of the literature based on death and bereavement looking especially from the viewpoint of modernism. The research findings and observations on death and bereavement from a cross-cultural stance were highlighted and the diversity of culture in the mourning practices and the mourning process was revealed. There

was, however, very little literature from a social Constructionist stance on the individual stories of death and bereavement from a South African point of view.

To orientate the reader, the historical aspect of death was traced along the Western attitude towards mortality. Various concepts were recognized within various psychological themes. These are the tame self, the death of the self, remote and imminent death, the death of the other, the invisible death and death as transposed and insulated. It seemed that initially death was misunderstood, thereby portraying fear. However, new attitudes regarding death that had emerged were discussed.

It was pointed out that death was a reminder to the survivor to acknowledge that one's future was uncertain. Facing death is hard, however, it is a valuable part of life and it facilitates one's personal growth. It was highlighted that the questions people explore through their religion are about rebirth, resurrection and the afterlife. Death was viewed as one of a series of rites through life; it should not be considered to be the end but only a physical separation. It was established that rituals and funerals were valuable and therapeutic for the survivors. Various citations and research findings regarding mourning practices were discussed.

Grief was defined according to the medical model and an analysis of grief was given. Popular theories of mourning and grief were discussed. Collectively, it is believed that grieving is a normal adaption to a loss. To recover from one's grief it seems that one needs to detach emotionally from the deceased. However, this concept was criticized and it was believed that we don't detach from the deceased but rather we perceive them differently. It appears that mourning involves accomplishing various tasks, such as accepting the reality of the loss, to experience the pain of grief, to adjust to the environment without the deceased and finally to reinvest one's energy in another relationship.

There are various determinants for grief and these were discussed from different contexts. It was indicated that the occasion for grief from a biological context is the loss of a relationship. The psychology aspects of grief are a function of the unusual historical and present circumstances of each individual. The cultural context includes how culture and religion is shaped by one's society and that grief occurs in the context of social relationships.

Bereavement behaviour was highlighted from the biological, psychological and cultural perspectives. The common patterns and period of grief was briefly discussed and a cultural aspect of one's behavioural response to grief was explained. Last but not least, the various controversial viewpoints concerning whether grief was indeed a universal construct or not was also given.

CHAPTER 3

EPISTEMOLOGY

No man can justly censure or condemn another because indeed no man truly knows another

Thomas Edward Brown

Introduction

“Epistemology” will be defined and explained in this chapter. Modernism as an epistemological view will also be outlined, and the shift away from modernism to post modernism will also be highlighted. The basic assumptions of the ecosystemic epistemology, cybernetics (system theory) and cybernetics of cybernetics (second order cybernetics) will be explained to orientate the reader of how the shift of the cybernetic epistemology moved towards post modernism. Constructivism will be briefly highlighted, and Social Constructionism as the theoretical framework underpinning the present study will be discussed.

Defining Epistemology

“Epistemology” is defined by Auerswald (1985) as the “study or a theory of the nature and the grounds of knowledge” (p. 1), or the theory of knowledge. Knowledge consists of information and the abstract expression of knowledge in spoken or written words is based on ‘thinking about thinking’. Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2002) state that epistemology “specifies the nature of the relationship between the [knower] and what can be known” (p.6). A discussion of Modernism will now follow.

Modernism

The Newtonian or Modernistic perspective on human behaviour (which has its roots in the Western, Scientific tradition) rests on the following assumptions: These assumptions all link with each other and will be referred to separately.

- Reality is considered to be something which is quantifiable, something that can be objectively discovered by using scientific methods. Reality is also assumed to exist independent of the researcher's mind.
- A linear cause and effect is assumed, which implies that any problem is solvable, the researcher must simply find the answer to the question 'Why?'
- The world is understood as consisting of objects and subjects which can be reduced to their smallest possible components in an attempt to discover objective and absolute truths about reality.
- The world is understood to be deterministic and to operate according to law-like principles (the discovery of which, are assumed to reveal absolute truths about reality)
- According to this tradition, the appropriate scientific methodology is empirical and quantitative.

(Becvar & Becvar, 2006, pp. 3-5)

Reductionism

The first assumption of the Newtonian notion is that reality is separate from us and can be reduced to small components to uncover the laws according to which the world operates. This means that an object or a phenomena can be observed objectively by means of experimentation and the results of these observations can thus can be measured quantitatively (Becvar & Becvar, 2006; Mouton & Marias, 1990). From the above perspective, all behaviour is therefore determined by internal events and/or external environment.

The following three approaches evolved from a reductionistic line of reasoning: the Psychoanalytic approach which focuses on specific underlying intra-psychic phenomena; the Medical approach which systematically reduces human behaviour and mental illness into

categories of symptoms; and the Behavioural approach which describes human functioning in terms of the relationship between the stimulus and the response.

The focus on grief or bereavement would therefore be on the root causes which can be observed objectively. Typical questions would be; why do bereaved individuals struggle to sever ties with the deceased? Or, why does separation from the lost object produce severe grief reactions in bereaved people? The various stages of grief and the determinants and predictors of grief would be the subject of study and thus be observed or measured (Gorer, 1965; Parkes & Weiss, 1983; Worden, 1983). Phenomena of death and bereavement from a Newtonian perspective would assume that bereavement or the emotions thereof have a linear causality. A cause and effect notion of the modernistic perspective is the next assumption underlying modernism.

Linear Causality

The assumption of linear causality describes the process whereby one event causes another. This view holds that a certain type of behaviour (*cause*) will result in a predictable outcome (*effect*). Many early models of grief were based on a belief in linear causality (Becvar & Becvar, 2006; Mouton & Marias, 1990). Looking from a modernist psychoanalytical viewpoint, the cause of grief is due to the loss of a loved object. Certain behavioural responses, such as crying or protesting is evoked by the loss of the loved object or person and to find out why these particular responses are evoked various theories have been devised such as the Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973).

Neutral Objectivity

The third assumption is that there is an absolute, objective reality which exists “out there” and which can be objectively observed and analyzed by an outside observer without the observer influencing it. This perspective arose due to the traditional scientific approach of the time, when observations were done in laboratories. These observations were regarded as the most objective, scientific approach possible. Hence, it was assumed that the discoveries and assumptions made from these discoveries were ‘value-free’ and that one could further

‘discover’ more scientific law until ‘all truth’ which exists ‘out there’ was finally discovered (Becvar & Becvar, 2006, p.5).

The appropriate scientific methodology for the discovery of this absolute, objective truth has always been empirical and quantitative from the Cartesian-Newtonian perspective, i.e. that truth and knowledge are ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered, measured and analyzed in much the same way as a scientist would discover things in a laboratory. For example, the medical approach’s DSM-IV system of classification enables the diagnostician to “objectively” classify and categorize a cluster of symptoms to form a diagnosis of what pathological grief would be. It has been accepted that social science research must be objective so that the findings of the research would be without bias and the research would be valid, reliable and applicable to the population as much as possible (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).

The development of the Quantum Theory and Albert Einstein’s Theory of Relativity challenged the security of Newtonian Science. The scientific world had to rethink their basic assumptions, in line with the *new physics*, which resulted in a shift away from modernism (Auerswald, 1985). This new epistemology will now be explained.

A New Epistemology

Two methods of thinking materialized from the shift from modernism, that is, the “general systems theory” or “simple cybernetics” and “cybernetics of cybernetics” or second order cybernetics. The difference between cybernetics and physics is a difference between epistemology. The cybernetics epistemology is a way of “discerning and knowing patterns that organize events”, whereas according to Keeny (1982), Newtonian epistemology is concerned with “knowing the nature of billiard balls and the forces that operate on them” (p.153).

The Cybernetics Epistemology

Cybernetics, the brainchild of Norman Weiner was described by him as “the Science of Communication and Control” and of “activity of feedback cycles in human affairs”

(Hoffman, 1990, p.2.) Becvar & Becvar (2006) defines cybernetics (systems theory) as the “relationships and interconnectedness of units as a large whole” (p.6). Systems Theory and Simple Cybernetics are used synonymously and they both share the same basic principles. The underlying assumption of simple cybernetics focus on the present ‘here-and-now’ and on the unit operating according to recursiveness and a self-correction feedback (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). The basic principles of first order cybernetics (simple cybernetics) will now be discussed.

Simple Cybernetics

Simple cybernetics is an epistemological school of thought that uses the metaphor of the black box to describe the operations of a system and the observations of the events and interaction in the system. The focus of simple cybernetics is on the interactions between people, rather than examining the individuals and the elements. The following are the principles of simple cybernetics (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).

- Recursion- The observer looks at the relationship of individuals and how each individual interacts with and influences the other. The *cause and effect* now becomes a reciprocal concept found between the individual and between the systems as they mutually influence each other and the focus is on the ‘what’, rather than the ‘why’ of the system (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).
- Feedback – This is a self-mechanism “process whereby information about past behaviours is fed back into the system (a family unit), in a circular manner” (Becvar & Becvar 2006, p.66). Information about the system can be channelled back into the system via the environment or by other systems either *positively*, referring to a change that has occurred and has been accepted by the system, or *negatively*, indicating that there has been no change in the system.
- Morphostasis and Morphogenesis – Morphostasis is the system’s tendencies towards stability in the context of change. Morphogenesis is the system’s enhancing behaviour that allows for growth, creativity, innovation and change, which reveals a functional system. A balance between these two states is necessary for the system to stay healthy and functional (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).

- Rules and Boundaries – The rules are the characteristic relationship patterns within the system. These rules express the values of a system and it ascribes the appropriate behavioural rolls of the system. Rules distinguish one system from another and form the boundaries of the system. Boundaries separate smaller systems from larger systems (hierarchical, structures, substructures and the suprasystems. The rules and boundaries of the system act as the gatekeeper for the flow of information in the system and the flow out of the system (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).
- Openness and Closedness - This refers to the input of new information which the system will either allow in or screen out. In a system, a balance between the openness and closeness is necessary in order for the system to function healthily. One could say the system tends towards a dysfunctional state if there is no balance between its openness and closedness.
- Entropy and Negentropy - A system that is too open or too closed it is said to be in a state of *entropy*, and can be defined as dysfunctional. When the balance between openness and closeness is maintained, then the system is in a state of *negentropy*. In this state, appropriate information and change is permitted and allowed in to the system whilst it screens out information and any potential changes that it would see as threat to its survival (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).
- Equifinality and Equipotentiality – These are two end states that a system reaches. When the system's redundant patterns of interactions (habitual processes of communication and behaving) incline towards a characteristic final end the system is in a state of *equifinality* and can be termed 'stuck'. When different end states are arrived at from same initial conditions the system is in a state of *equipotentiality*.
- Communication and Information processing - The core of all systems is its communication and information processing. There are three basic principles to communicating and the processing of information in systems (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). The actual word being spoken is the 'verbal' mode. The meaning of the

communicated verbal message and the nonverbal tone is the 'nonverbal' mode and lastly the situation that determines the sort of rules in relationships is the 'context'

The manner in which information is shared and the various modes of communication between people in a system enables one to understand what the relationship is between those individuals and the wholeness aspect of a system. Language is a digital representational system of our experience; it not only represents our experience to ourselves but it also re-presents or communicates the representations of our experiences to others (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).

- Relationship and Wholeness – Becvar & Becvar, (2006) assert that the basic rule in simple cybernetics is that the “whole is greater than the sum of its parts” (p.75). The relationship styles adopted by and the interactions between the individuals are important and provide therapists and researchers with valuable information about the system. There are three relational styles, namely complimentary, symmetrical and parallel.

To conclude, simple cybernetics or first order cybernetics is concerned about describing what is happening in a system, that is, therapists and researchers are placed outside the system and observe the characteristic patterns of interactions taking place in the system or black box. It is a circular approach rather than a linear approach. Cybernetics of cybernetics, or second order cybernetics, is a shift to a higher level and alternatively views the observer as “part of that which is being observed” (Becvar & Becvar, 2006, p.78).

Cybernetics of Cybernetics

Second order cybernetics thinks in terms of both linearity and recursiveness, however they do believe it is the observer who represents the difference that “create the reality” (MacKinnon & Miller, 1987, p.150). The observer and observed are viewed as ‘a co-evolving system engaged in a recursive process (p.151). The observer is thus part of that which is being observed. It is thought that individuals create their own different and self-referential reality which is both true and valid for them. A discussion of the basic assumptions of second order cybernetics will follow bellow (Mackinnon & Miller, 1987).

- Self-Reference - In second order cybernetics, the observer becomes a participant in that which is observed. Reality is self-referential in the system. Boundaries are unbroken and therefore there are no references made to the outside environment. Interactions between the observer and the observed are mutual and simultaneous. The system is considered to be a closed and autonomous one (Becvar & Becvar, 2006; MacKinnon & Miller, 1987).
- Autonomy - Every system, according to Dell 1985 (cited in MacKinnon & Miller, 1987) has its own “autonomous individuality” (p. 149), and it is the system itself that specifies how it will behave and not the interactions that take place within a system. Autopoiesis, is “the highest order of recursion” (Becvar & Becvar, 2006 p.79) and refers to “the maintenance of the system’s distinctive wholeness or identity” (MacKinnon & Miller, 1987, p.149). Becvar & Becvar (2006) states that the system “does what it does in order to do what it does” (p. 81), indicating that there is only negative feedback at this 2nd order level. Thus the system functions to maintain the status quo within itself.
- Structural Determinism - In second order cybernetics, a system is limited because of its structure. Since the system is closed the environment is unable to influence or determine what the system can do. The environment or independent events can only “influence the context” (Hoffman, 1985, p. 393), or provide the context for the “occurrence of what the system’s structure determines it can do” (Becvar & Becvar, 2006, p.82). Since the system is structurally determined, it can therefore become or do whatever its structure allows it to do or become.
- Structural Coupling – Living systems exist amongst other systems and not in isolation. Structural coupling defines or describes the degree of the coexistence between the various systems. According to Becvar and Becvar (2006), people change their behaviour and evaluate the effect of their changed behaviour according to the reaction of it by others, and then they respond to these reactions. If these patterns of interaction change, feedback in the system has been achieved and a change in context has arisen (p.83).

- Epistemology of Participation - The “observer and the observed are inextricably bound up with each other” (Becvar & Becvar, 2006, p.83) and therefore to be objective is impossible. The interaction between the observer and observed (questioning, describing and meaning-making) entails perturbation and compensation within the context.
- Reality as a Multiverse - Second order cybernetics focus on multi realities, and not on objective and subjective realities therefore this epistemology assumes individuals live in a multiverse of many valid realities. The belief is that individuals perceive and construct their environment. That is, people construct their own reality by understanding and containing input via their personal worldview (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).

Systemic/cybernetics had run its course; however, cybernetics of cybernetics had encouraged a shift towards a postmodern perspective. Postmodernism appeared as an alternative form of inquiry in psychology. A brief description of postmodernism will now be given.

Postmodernism

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002), postmodernism is an expansive term used for a range of different approaches which contest the goal directedness, efficiency and rationality of modernism. Anderson (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 2006) noted that Postmodernism emerged as an alternative form of inquiry among theoreticians and scholars since the certainty, the methods and practices of modernism were being questioned as not complete to explain all human behaviour (Becvar & Becvar,2006).

Postmodernism undermines the modernist idea that there is objective knowledge and absolute truth, rather, they recognize the possibility of multiple perspectives. The postmodernist assumes that there are many truths which are created within the context of a person’s social and historical background and the person’s experiences. According to Doan (1997), postmodernism emerged after it became evident that there were alternative stories about the world at large and that there was not just “one true account”, which means we “live more in a *multi-verse*” (p.129).

Berger and Luckman (1976, p.35, cited in Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002) state “among the multiple realities, there is one that presents itself as the reality par excellence, this is the reality of everyday life (which) always appears as a zone of lucidity behind which there is a background of darkness” (p.153). It seems that there is no single, true story or reality rather we share the knowledge we have with each other people, which means that our reality of everyday life is shared. Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2002) allege that we live and create reality based on our own “unique combinations of heredity, experiences and perceptions”. Each person’s reality is valid and therefore we must admit that we “live in a multi-verse of many equally valid observer-dependent realities” (p. 85).

Watts (1972; cited in Becvar & Becvar, 2006) declares that because we think in terms of languages and images invented by others, our experienced emotions and private thoughts are not really our own. Thus the language and images we have of our world are given to us by society (p.94). Looking from the postmodern stance, the basic assumption is that people have equally valid perceptions and there is no single ‘correct’ account of reality. A discussion of two epistemologies within postmodernism, constructivism and social constructionism, will now follow.

Constructivism

Social Constructivism, a postmodern movement, is concerned about how social phenomena develop in social contexts. The constructivists view within the cybernetic paradigm speculates that there is no objective reality, but rather the observer constructs and maintains reality and each individual structures their own perceptions of reality. Thus, all we can know are our personal constructions of world phenomena and the ‘world’ (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996; Doan, 1997; MacKinnon & Miller, 1987).

The constructivist model offers an alternative way of thinking to the modernistic view, and is therefore consistent with postmodernism. Instead of relating to the cause of a problem, constructivists are more concerned about the meanings that are attached to problems (Hoffman, 1985). The focus is on individuals meaning making within a social context. It appears that people do not “discover” the world out there, but rather people “invent” it (Hoffman, 1985, p. 390).

Constructivists believe all accounts of reality are equally valid. “Any one person’s frame is as true as any other and whatever works in any situation becomes what matters” (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996, p.80) Constructivists allege that “all interaction takes place between “informationally closed” nervous systems that can only influence each other in indirect ways” (Hoffman, 1990, p.3). Perceptions and constructions occur as organisms “bump against the environment” (Hoffman, 1991, p.4).

The constructivists paradigm falls short of the typical postmodern perspective by believing that “if a narrative works in a particular context” (Doan, 1997, p.131) then “all accounts of reality are equally valid” (p.130). However, there seems to be no single true story or reality (Doan, 1997; Gergen, 1985). Reality from a postmodern viewpoint is considered to be socially constructed, which means there is no one social truth, but rather many multiple realities and stories.

Postmodernism allows for subjugated and oppressed groups to reconstruct their world in accordance with their own interests rather than with the interests of the dominant groups in society (Doan, 1997). The Social Constructionist theoretical framework falls under the umbrella of postmodernism and is best suited for the present study since it permits people to respect alternative worldviews of oppressed groups as well as it recognizes multiple realities. It “deconstructs Grand narratives and is aware of the cultural factors in the production of dominant accounts” (Doan, 1997, p.131). The Social Constructionist approach and its basic assumptions will now be discussed.

A Social Constructionist Approach

Introduction

Social Constructionism is a sociological theory. According to Owen (1992), Social Constructionism is a development instigated by Marx and Mannheim, and it draws on the works of Mead and Parsons (Haralambos, 1985). Marx claimed that institutions such as political, legal, belief and value systems (superstructures) were formed by the economic base (Haralambos, 1985, p.12). Marx also stated that social existence determines consciousness (Owen, 1992). From a Social Constructionist viewpoint, Owen (1992) maintains that “the content of our consciousness and the mode of relating we have to others, is taught by our

culture and society: all the metaphysical quantities we take for granted are learnt from others around us” (p. 386).

Social Constructionism places importance on political, historical and social interpretation and the interactions between people. Emphasis is placed on the intersubjective influence of language, family and culture (Gergen, 1985; Hoffman, 1990). In essence, Social Constructionism is basically concerned with understanding the social context in which people describe and explain their worldview and the way in which language is used to enable people to share their experiences. Since the researcher would like to understand the social context in which bereaved people interact and share their worldviews, the Social Constructionist framework has been chosen for her research.

According to Gergen (1985), knowledge stems from the various interactions a person has with his or her environment, and a person’s interest and values form a part of that which is being perceived. Gergen (1985) lists the following assumptions that are typical of a Social Constructionist perspective.

- “What we experience and know of the world does not itself dictate the terms by which the world is understood”.
- “The terms in which the world is understood are social artefacts products of historically situated interchanges among people”.
- “The degree to which a given form of understanding prevails or sustained across time is not fundamentally dependent on the empirical validity of the perspectives in question, but on the vicissitudes of social processes”.
- “Forms of negotiated understanding are of critical significance in social life as they are integrally connected with many other activities in which people engage”.

(pp. 267-268)

Since the basic premise of Social Constructionism is to understand the social context in which people describe and explain their worldview, and the language that enables these people to share their experiences, the function of both the social context and language will be discussed below.

The social context

According to Berger and Berger 1975(cited in (Alant, 1990), “man is produced by society and society is produced by man” (p.11) and knowledge, including our knowledge of what is ‘real’ is socially constructed (Hoffman, 1990, p.3). It is believed that people are born into a society and culture with pre-existing norms and predefined patterns of behaviour and what is ‘real’ is socially transmitted from generation to generation and is reinforced by social sanctions. Existing group definitions are learned and internalized through a process of socialization, and it is this knowledge that becomes part of one’s worldview and ideology (Gergen, 1985).

It appears that the knowledge that people possess is not something that exists in their heads rather it is the interactions they have with each other (Gergen, 1985). Social Constructionists believe that the experience of a person’s world is ordered and that the world is comprised of a series of separate events and groups of people who engage in distinct actions in a particular order. It is thought that other people perceive reality in much the same way as others do, and that people share the knowledge they have of their own reality with others. People then behave according to the social conventions that are based on that knowledge (Gergen, 1985).

Gergen (1985) alleges that meanings and interpretations are created out of what people experience and what arises in particular settings and traditions. This means that people view their world according to the various communities that they are members of and their realities and assumption of their social world are sustained and supported by their beliefs, social, political and economical institutions.

It appears that according to the Social Constructionist viewpoint the act of grieving could be that which is ‘defined’ as grieving by the people in a society. Certain events such as crying, attending funerals and mourning would then defined as grief or bereavement by health care professionals, friends and family members (Haralambos, 1985, p.498). By employing a

Social Constructionist approach, the researcher intends to engage with the participants who have been constructed as bereaved and hopes to reconstruct a reality of death and bereavement that fits the members of their community and their own reality.

Social Constructionists believe there are many truths and facts that are “interpretations which emerge against the backdrop of socially shared understanding” (Durrheim, 1997, p.177). When a group of people come together and agree upon certain sets of rules and norms, a social reality is constructed. However, it seems that people in power, whether socially and politically, influence the concepts used and thus can socially construct the laws that govern a country. Social Constructionists question the dominant knowledge structures and focus on the concept that knowledge is power and that there are many forms of dominant discourses (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996).

Dominant discourses are structures of power which act as an interpretive guide towards classifying topics and what represents data. According to Hoffman (1991), Social Constructionists challenge “dominant beliefs that dictate single accounts of reality or singular truths” (p.5). Brunner 1996 (cited in Hart, 1995) alleged that there “are always feelings and lived experiences” that are not embraced by the dominant society (p.185)

It appears that confusion and problems can occur in certain societies when cultural normative specifications and a person’s personal experiences are subjugated. People may find it difficult to distinguish between what they experience, what their values and beliefs are, and the specified or dominant beliefs that they are subjected to. Viewpoints, beliefs and ideas may help to serve the members of a dominant culture, but subsequently these dominant beliefs may in fact disrespect and subjugate others whose belief systems vary from the more dominant group (Dickerman & Zimmerman, 1996).

Dominant voices deny the validity of minority or less dominant voices. Social Constructionists look to overturn convention and deconstruct the truth. Their aim is to “disrupt the oppressive and exploitative effects associated with institutionalized discourses” (Durrheim, 1997, p.181). Social Constructionists deconstruct the Grand narratives by concentrating on how established norms have developed over time “especially those that marginalize and subjugate and people” (Doan, 1997, p.129). It is believed that significantly

large numbers, various traditions and fixed embedded power structures support Grand Narratives (Doan, 1997).

Doan (1997) alleged that Social Constructionists are concerned about stories that “honour and respect the community of voices (p.131) natural in all people and how these stories can be respected in specific organizations. It is the notion that Social Constructionists can encourage and help people to ‘become their own authors’ and in doing so escape the “dominating influences of oppressive domains of knowledge” (Doan, 1997, p.131).

Cultural groups may differ radically in their views about death and bereavement. It is from a Social Constructionist framework that the researcher in the current study can begin to understand the relationship between the larger society and the people within a particular group in regards to death and bereavement. The researcher in the present study understands that some groups may have modified their customs to merge with the dominant culture. The magnitude of the Constructionist paradigm in this study may be appreciated against the backdrop of South African history (Gergen, 1985).

One must consider the possibility that in South Africa, the values and beliefs of the non-dominant groups may have been in conflict with the values and beliefs of the dominant group since a Western-based perspective on bereavement was the dominant language (Hanson, Lynch & Wayman, 1990). However, in the new democratic South Africa, all groups would like to have a voice and thus it is the researcher’s aim to provide an opportunity through language to those who are constructed as bereaved to shape and construct their own reality.

The importance of Language

A fundamentally important assumption to the Social Constructionist’s viewpoint is that reality is socially constructed through language. Language provides the base for people to make sense of their world. Language allows people to share their experiences and to interpret new experiences. A notion put forward by Gergen (1985) is that “languages are essentially shared activities”; that is, what we take for granted as knowledge is that which is “represented in linguistic proportions” and is “constituents of social practices” (p. 270).

According to Lynch (1997) there is no private language, but rather that language is a “public phenomenon” (p.354). It is the notion that our worldview is confined and shaped by the language system available to us within our particular social context. Even our view of ourselves is an expression of the language formed by our particular culture, our interactions with each other and the society we live in. Lynch (1997) cites “the meaning of a word is in its use “in language”, and that words are tools and language is like a tool box” (p. 180); that is, the function of words is as diverse as the function of the objects in a tool box. The criterion for using a word correctly is derived from our cultural and social practices.

If the idea that language is a ‘public phenomenon’ and how we behave is identified by social or cultural convention, then one can assume that one’s co-constructed ‘experienced stories’ have been shaped by a language which may typify the cultural norms as well as the dominant voices of the dominant structures of a community.

An individual’s reactions to death, their grieving and mourning practices, and the reactions of others to the said bereavement can be said to be socially constructed through language and the shared intersubjective meaning the bereaved has constructed with those around them. (Lynch, 1997).

The Social Constructionist in research

Social Constructionists do not reject science as a way of ‘knowing’ rather they believe there are alternative truths and no one absolute truth. Social constructionists seek to explore and understand the procedures used by its members to construct their social reality. Death, grief and bereavement may be constructs of “social actors” and aspects of “social reality” (Haralambos, 1985, p.500).

In a Social Constructionist research study, it is important to locate meaning and understanding of how ideas and attitudes have developed within a political and social community (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996, p.80). The researcher’s intention is to discover the meaning and understanding of how death and bereavement has arisen within the political and social community of her participants, who have been constructed as bereaved by giving the bereaved a chance to tell their story.

The Social Constructionist researcher in practice sees the “interview as an arena within which particular linguistic patterns (typical phrases, metaphors, arguments, stories) can come to the fore” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p.153). Thus the researcher in the current study will use the interviewing arena to encourage the participants to tell their stories about death and bereavement and the “narratives constructed for them by others” (Hart, 1995, p.185). Anderson and Goolishian 1988 (cited in Hart, 1995) state that “we live with each other in a world of conversational narratives and we understand ourselves and each other through changing stories and self-descriptions” (p.184).

The researcher will adopt a ‘not-knowing’ stance, which is also known as being a collaborative style of relating to her participants. This does not mean that she or her participants do not have prior knowledge or experience of the phenomenon, on the contrary, it means the researcher will put aside her knowledge and experience and rather be guided by “curiosity” (Jankowski et al, 2000, p.244). Jankowski et al (2000, p.244) state that the ‘not-knowing’ researcher;

“Shifts away from acquiring data that fit into specific theories or models, instead the focus is on creating a context for the research participant’s experience to develop and be known in conversation with the investigator”.

The researcher hopes to understand the impact of death and what death and bereavement means to the participants who are constructed as bereaved whilst “conversing” with them. “Understanding is deemed to be a “product of both the researcher and the participants’ prior knowledge” (Jankowski et al, 2000, p.245). The researcher will accept her involvement with her participants as necessary as well as her role within the research. She will fully immerse herself in the in-depth inquiry with each participant and will acknowledge that the real world is subject to change, and will record the constructions and co-constructions that exist between her and the participants. The constructionist researcher is interested in personally narrated stories based on lived experiences and not on voices of “expert knowledge” (Doan, 1997, p. 130).

The aim of the therapist or researcher is to help those whose stories have got muddled or don’t work for them anymore. Social constructionists acknowledge that it is difficult to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings when they allow one story to go forward at the cost of

others. The researcher's aim is to help her participants construct their story or their lived experience of death and bereavement and thereby reveal an alternative view to that of the Westernized established domains of knowledge and power (Doan, 1997).

Conclusion

In this chapter, the basic principles of modernism were discussed to prepare the reader for the discussion on postmodernism. The aim of the researcher in the current study is to present an alternative view or truth on the phenomenon of death and bereavement. A discussion of modernism followed, detailing the assumptions of the systems theory. A brief outlay of second order cybernetics was highlighted and the steps that led to the new alternative thinking of postmodernism were discussed. An explanation of the framework that will be implemented by this study, Social Constructionism, was provided. The chapter highlighted how Social Constructionists are interested in how reality is a product of social interaction and how the reality of everyday life is shared. The notion that people experience the world as an objective reality and that language provides the basis of which we make sense of the world is central to the Social Constructionist approach. Social Constructionists challenge the dominant beliefs that dictate single accounts of reality and truth. Thus, it was stated how the Social Constructionist's mode of inquiry is ideal in the current study to encourage culturally-diverse people, to speak of their own experiences and to tell their stories of death and bereavement in their own words. It was also mentioned that the Social Constructionist Epistemology is the ideal method to provide the people of South Africa a secure space and a voice to tell their personal stories.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The knowledge of the world is only to be acquired in the world, and not in a closet

Phillip Stanhope

Introduction

An explanation of research methodology will be given in this chapter. A discussion of the theoretical research design (social constructionism) will be given, together with an explanation of the method of application. The characteristics of the research approach will also be highlighted. The focus of inquiry, that is, 'who' will be studied and 'what' will be studied, will be explained; together with the sampling methods and techniques used. The means of inquiry and the method of inquiry will be briefly provided. Details of the information collection process and techniques will be explained. Lastly, the procedures to capture the information and the means of analyzing the data will be described in full.

Defining Research Methodology

The methodological dimension of research focuses on the 'how' of the research. That is how the research should be planned and executed. According to Mouton and Marias (1999), the epistemological meaning of the word 'methodology' is interpreted as "the logic of implementing scientific methods in the study" (p.15). The research elects which paradigm theory is best suited for the investigation of the study and which measuring instruments and data collection methods will be best to utilize.

The present study will be conducted from a Social Constructionist perspective and the planning and executing of the research will be considered from the underlying principles of this perspective. In scientific research, two distinguishable methodological approaches are available, namely quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative approach is generally

formalized, controlled and usually has a testable hypothesis. The procedures of the qualitative method on the other hand are not firmly formalized but rather they are “spontaneous and fortuitous” (Mouton & Marias, 1990, p.160).

The current study will adopt the qualitative approach since it is best suited for a social constructionist study. The researcher seeks to understand the phenomenon of death and bereavement in three various cultures in South Africa and a flexible and evolving research design will be required. Therefore, since qualitative research requires no hard and fixed steps to adhere to, this approach has been chosen (De Vos, 2002).

The Research Design

Design, according to De Vos (2002), is defined “as all the decisions a researcher makes in planning the study” (p.271). Cresswell 1998 (cited in De Vos 2002) defines design as “the entire process of research from conceptualizing a problem to writing the narrative” (p.271). A research design aims to plan and structure the data collection and data analysis. This includes the exact techniques that will be used, such as the type of sampling, sampling techniques, method of inquiry and method of analyzing the material. In a quantitative research design, the design determines the researcher’s choice, whilst in a qualitative research design choices and actions determine the decision.

The Paradigm of the Research

De Vos (2002) define a paradigm as a “pattern or a model” (p.43). Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) define a paradigm as “all encompassing system of interrelated practices and thinking that define the researchers the nature of their enquiry along three dimensions”, namely ontology, epistemology and methodology (p.6). Each broad type of research has a particular ontology, epistemology and methodology. The term ‘ontology’ refers to the nature of the world and what we can know about it. ‘Epistemology’ is the relationship between the researcher and what can be known. ‘Methodology’ refers to the practical methods used by the researcher. There are three distinct paradigms of research. They are positivist, interpretive, and constructionist (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The Positivist approach assumes that there is an objective reality which can be objectively observed through control and manipulation. This research approach is usually quantitative in nature, though it could be qualitative and the phenomenon being studied is reduced to numerical data. The aim is to discover facts about the social world and describe it in terms of objective data. The methods used are tests, questionnaires, objective observation, experiments and statistical procedures (Terre Blanche & Durheim, 2002).

The research methods used for grief and bereavement have been both qualitative and quantitative (Bailey & Gregg, 1986; Dobson & Harper, 1983; Engel, 1961; Gore, 1965; Parks & Weiss, 1999). A quantitative approach does not lend itself for personal accounts and personal experiences to surface. The subject matter of both the social and natural sciences are basically different. Man has a consciousness with feelings, meaning and intentions. Since man's actions are meaningful, man delineates his situations and gives meaning to his actions and to those of others too (Haralambos, 1985). An approach that does indeed allow rich and meaningful experiences to emerge is the interpretive approach.

The Interpretive Perspective is also known as a hermeneutic or descriptive approach. The intention of the interpretive approach is to understand subjective inner meanings and experiences of an individual. The methodologies that are frequently used are observation, open-ended interviews, qualitative interpretation and thematic content analysis. One assumption of the interpretive approach is that the social world can be defined by an individual's subjective experience of the external world (Terre Blanche & Durheim, 2002). The researcher engages with and becomes involved with the participant and observes and classifies recurring themes and patterns of the participant's subjective meaningful feelings and experiences (Terre Blanche & Durheim, 2002).

The Social Constructionist Perspective aims to identify the function of attitudes and knowledge. The focus is on how the knowledge fits into the broader social and political context of meaning (Gergen, 1985). Ontologically, the social world is not objective, rather it is what people socially construct when they talk and act towards what they deem to be real (Jankowski, Clark & Ivey, 2000). The constructionist epistemology assumes that research should focus on the ideologies that make up the social world. The observer is a co-constructor of people's realities/stories. From a Social Constructionist perspective, the act of grieving or bereavement is simply that which is defined as grief by social beings in a certain

society and it is these definitions and realities of death and bereavement that will be viewed during the present study.

The interpretive and constructionist approaches will be used simultaneously in the study, as both these approaches lend themselves to the researchers' aim to be a part of as well as being separated from the information elicited and analyzed. The interpretive approach allows the researcher to seek the participants' subjective meaning behind death and bereavement, whilst the constructionist approach allows the researcher to understand the shared meanings and interpretation that has developed within the three different cultural societal contexts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

Qualitative research seeks to understand a phenomenon in context-specific without attempting to manipulate that which is being studied or understood. The research study will be conducted from a qualitative research method, since it benefits the interpretive and constructionist paradigms. The principles of the qualitative approach will be outlined next.

The qualitative research method

Qualitative research, according to Strauss & Corbin (1990, p. 17, cited in (Golafshani, 2003), can be defined as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (p.600). Qualitative research as a research method will enable the researcher to understand how the three participants experience death and bereavement. According to Mouton and Marias (1990), "*concepts and constructs* are meaningful words" (p.160) that can be analyzed and interpreted in many ways. Qualitative research enables the researcher to become involved with the concept of death and of bereavement and to become a part of the phenomena. The basic assumptions of a qualitative research approach will be given.

Holism- The holistic approach of qualitative research explores the complex system of interrelationships that exist and are developed in specific situations (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). The phenomenon of death and bereavement under a qualitative holistic study is understood as a complex system that 'is more than the sum of its parts' (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p.49). The researcher will focus on the complex interdependent differences of the three participants in the study as well as the socio-historical and linguistic

context. A holistic view will emerge as information is gathered relating to death and bereavement through repeated appointments with the same participant in a series of in-depth interviews. The concern is not gain proof and to control the environment as is typical of quantitative research, but rather, the aim is to consider all people, behaviour phenomena within their context and to allow the participants of this study to voice their personal stories, which is typical of Social Constructionism.

Personal Narratives, or the personal accounts and the ‘here and now’, is the focus of qualitative research. The aim of the researcher is to find ways to question and inquire that will enable one to make connections between the here and now, the larger social and cultural structures and the experiences of each participant. Social Constructionism is interested in the unique experiences of people, and qualitative research allows the researcher to document people’s unique personal stories, making the qualitative research method ideal and it fits in well with a social constructionist epistemology.

Interpretive research as a qualitative method is ideally the preferred method to gain a personal and intimate understanding of people, thereby helping the researcher to truly understand what the participant is feeling (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). The interpretative method allows the researcher to be subjectively involved and to access the personal accounts of each of the individuals’ bereaved experience. Narrative accounts of a participants thoughts and feelings is, according to Terre Blanche & Durrheim(2002), “one way of tying together the ‘bits” of a case study or the little stories into a coherent whole unified story(p. 415).

Documenting stories and personal accounts of people is very typical of the Social Constructionist theoretical framework. This perspective will allow the three culturally-diverse participants to relate their personal stories of their experience of loss and bereavement without any subjugation. In qualitative studies, quantifying results are not a necessity, rather it is more important to document the subjective meanings and discover the similarities and differences that exist between the three participants’ grieving experience. Additionally, the researcher will document the co-constructed stories and the new co-constructed reality that is typical of a study of this nature.

Alternative truths: In qualitative research, it is more important to understand a human phenomenon from within its context and to discover universal truths, than to hypothesize and

make predictions. Qualitative research focuses on the inner subjective meanings and experiences of the subject and how knowledge fits into the broader social contexts of meaning. Knowledge does not mirror the real world out there typical of quantitative research; instead it is about subjective experiences and sustaining certain truths about the world (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). A postmodern qualitative research harmonizes with the premise that there is not one singular truth but many alternative truths (Becvar & Becvar, 2006; Gergen, 1985; Hoffman, 1991).

Qualitatively, researchers are not concerned with uncovering facts and the cause and effect of phenomena. They are also not focused on using tests and experiments to quantify data, rather the researcher would like to understand and become involved with her participants and observe and identify the descriptions of their personal stories. The researcher hopes to understand the “world of intersubjectively shared meaning making” amongst the participants in her research (Becvar & Becvar, 2006, p. 92).

The researcher: In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is to understand and take note of how respondents subjectively experience certain phenomena as well as what the respondent’s explanation for those experiences are. That means the researcher must “understand the world from the ‘inside out’” and from the “‘outside in’” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p.402). The researchers role is also to describe how talking about a phenomenon such as death and bereavement serves to construct taken-for-granted narratives. A qualitative researcher aims therefore to construct alternative social realities.

The researcher should “strike a critical distance” from the dominant culture and be familiar with the wide systems of meaning that exist in society (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p. 159). She should also have the required skills to observe behaviour, listen attentively and interpret in a skilful manner (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). De Vos (2002) assert that the most fundamental skill a researcher should develop is the “ability to analyze an interview while participating in it” (p.301). This can be achieved if the qualitative researcher becomes involved with the phenomena researched and plays a “role within the research” (Golafshani, 2003, p.600). The researcher is also an important factor in terms of validating a research project, as her or his “ethical integrity becomes critical for the quality of the scientific knowledge produced” (Kvale, 1995, p.24).

Ethical concerns: An important factor in qualitative research is the careful consideration of potential ethical issues. Ethical dilemmas usually arise when there is conflict in moral standards or values. Terre Blanch & Durrheim (2002) list three ethical principles the researcher will need to be cognizance of. *Autonomy* the first principle requires the researcher to respect the independence of the participant being researched, and thus obtain informed consent from the participant. *Nonmaleficence*, the second principle, requires the researcher to ensure that no harm will come to the participant being researched. *Beneficence*, the last principle requires the researcher to design the study in a way to as to benefit the participant and society on a whole. The researcher intends to achieve all three principles requirements in the current study.

The researcher will also follow the ethical guidelines listed by Becvar & Becvar, 2006 (pp.304-308), Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 2002, (pp.66-69) and Rosnow and Rosenthal, 1996, (pp.62-64), which are *Responsibility to Research Participants*, *Confidentiality* and *Competence*. The researcher will show *Responsibility to Research Participants* by treating each participant with courtesy, respect and professionalism. Informed consent will be obtained from the participants, where each participant will be informed about the nature of the study and given a clear explanation of what is expected of them in the research. They will thus be able to make their own decision as to whether they will be willing to participate in the study or not. There is no intended deception in the research study since each participant will be simply asked to provide the account of their own personal stories of their experience of death and bereavement. However, the researcher intends to give an explanation to each participant concerning the nature of and the purpose of the study.

In addition to obtaining consent from the participant the researcher will practice *confidentiality*. That is, the researcher will protect the welfare and identity of the participants. She will assure them of their anonymity. The participants will be told of how the data will be collected and recorded and will have the opportunity to view the transcribed printed material to ensure their peace of mind in terms of remaining anonymous. Participants will only be asked to give information relevant to the topic in a further attempt to safeguard their privacy (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). The raw data the researcher receives from each participant, as well as their personal details, will be securely stored

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) warn the researcher to be 'attentive' in areas of deep emotional experiences during an in-depth inquiry, stating that the interview could "take a life of its own" and could become like a "psychotherapy sermon" (p.387). To proceed with caution, from the onset of the inquiry, the researcher will be aware of each participant's response to the questions that may be asked, and will inform them of their right to decline to respond to any question. The participants will be made to feel comfortable with the level of 'exploration' and conversation at all times during the in-depth inquiry. Since the researchers ethical integrity is important to the quality of the knowledge produced, ethical requirements will be adhered to (Kvale, 1995).

Validity: Broadly, validity refers to "the truth and correctness of a statement", while in social science specifically, validity means "whether a method measures what it is intended to measure" (Kvale, 1995, p.3). By positivism standards, qualitative research is therefore invalid. However, Stenbacka (2001) states that the concept of validity should be "redefined for qualitative research" (cited in Golafshani, 2003, p.602). Cresswell and Miller 2000 (cited in Golafshani, 2003) state that because validity is affected by the choice of a researcher's paradigm assumption the researcher develops his/her own terms which are more appropriate. One such term is *trustworthiness*. Trustworthiness as an idea to discover the truth and according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) is "defensible and it establishes confidence in the findings" (Golafshani, 2003, p.602).

Jankowski, Clark and Ivy (2000) allege that validity focuses on the degree to which the researcher's "preconceived ideas and assumptions force data in to pre existing categories and theoretical frameworks" (p.242). According to Chenail and Mainone (1997, cited in Jankowski et al, 2000), a major concern in research validity is a researcher's pre-existing sense of the phenomenon or the exposure the researcher may have to the phenomenon being studied, since it may colour the study. However, there are various methods that may be used to combat validity fears.

Triangulation is a method that involves collecting material in as many different ways and from as many different sources as possible (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002), in an effort to improve the validity and reliability of research (De Vos, 2002; Kvale, 1995). The act of triangulation gives the researcher reason to be confident in her results and it can help to uncover a deviant dimension of a phenomenon.

Bracketing is another method to ensure validity and refers to “making preconceived ideas explicitly known beforehand” (Jankowski et al, 2000, p.242). Bracketing basically requires the researcher to temporarily forget about everything he or she knows and feels about the phenomenon and to simply listen to what the phenomenon is telling the researcher (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p.140).

An additional method to ensure validity is self-reflexivity. Chenail and Mainone 1997 (cited in Jankowski et al, 2000) define self-reflexivity as “thinking about one’s experience with the understanding of the phenomenon, the participants understanding of the phenomenon and one’s on-going sense-making process” during the research process (p.242). Reflexivity is an important aspect of a qualitative research project. The researcher will be actively constructing and reconstructing knowledge, and reflexivity ensures that the researcher will be aware of how preconceived ideas and assumptions can influence all facets of the research. The researcher will endeavour to reveal and unpack any new understandings with the reader.

Social Constructionism has amalgamated bracketing and self-reflexivity and named it a ‘not knowing’ stance to validity in research. The word ‘stance’ refers to the researcher’s values, beliefs and assumptions about herself, her participant and the research. A “non-knowing” stance is a collaborative style in which the researcher can relate to the participants and seek to understand the participant’s experience of death and bereavement through learning from and about the participant. The researcher will adopt a “non-knowing” approach and will create an arena for the experience of death and bereavement of the three woman participants to come to the fore (Jankowski et al, 2000).

Postmodernism rejects the notion of a universal truth. According to Rosenau 1992, (cited in Kvale, 1995) postmodernism accept;

“...the possibility of specific local personal and community form of truth, with a focus on daily life and local narrative”

(p.20)

Kvale (1995) assumes that the understanding of validity begins in “the lived world and daily language, where issues of reliable witnesses, of valid documents and arguments are part of the social interaction”. Thus, from a Social Constructionist perspective, the focus is on interpretation and conciliation of the meaning of the lived world, and knowledge is “communication between two persons” (Kvale, 1995, p.23)

Reliability: According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002), reliability can be defined as “the degree to which the results of a research are repeatable” (p.63) and refers to the “dependability of a measured instrument” (p.88). From a positivist perspective, the world and reality is believed to be stable and unchanging and the symbolic system, such as language and numbers, can be objectively and accurately measured. If the study is reliable, then the same set of results will be achieved in repeated replications of the study (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Patton 2001 (cited in Golafshani, 2003) states that reliability and validity are two areas that should concern the researcher when a study is being designed (p.601). However, Stenbacka 2001 (cited in Golafshani, 2003) states that the concept of reliability could be considered as being “misleading” and even “irrelevant” in qualitative research (p.601).

Instead of using the concepts of reliability and validity as criteria in qualitative research, one should use terms that are more appropriate to qualitative paradigms. Lincoln & Guba 1985 (cited in Golafshani, 2003) suggest that terms such as, *credibility*, *neutrality* or *confirmability*, *consistency* or *dependability* and *applicability* or *transferability* are more suited for qualitative research. The most suitable term is *dependability*, since it strongly corresponds to the notion of ‘reliability’ in quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba 1985 cited in Golafshani, 2003, p.601). According to Clont 1992, and Seale 1999, (cited in Galafshani, 2003) the term ‘dependability’ is on a par with ‘consistency’ or ‘reliability’ in qualitative research. The consistency of information can be achieved “when the steps of the research are verified through the examination of such items as raw data, data reduction products, and process notes” (Golafshani, 2003, p.601).

Qualitative researchers believe that social phenomena depend on the context with which it occurs and that the meaning of what is being researched depends on the specific situation the person finds themselves in (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Social Constructionists examine a changing reality and don’t expect to find the same results when a study is repeated.

In a Social Constructionist study, researchers *expect* individuals, organizations and groups to behave differently and have various opinions in contexts that are always changing. Thus instead of using reliability as a criterion in qualitative research, a more applicable one would be the dependability of a research study.

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002), dependability is defined as “the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher says they did” (p.64). Dependability can be achieved through “rich and detailed descriptions that show how certain actions and opinions are rooted in and developed out of contextual interaction” (Terre Blanche& Durrheim, 2002, p.64). This means that the context in which the phenomena occur is an important factor in qualitative research, and since contexts can and do change, interpretations would therefore vary too.

Ideally, the in-depth inquiry should be conducted without a researcher having prior information or experiences of the phenomena being researched. However, it is difficult for the researcher to remain neutral since she concedes that she has a prior experience of bereavement herself. She acknowledges that her own ideas and concepts and the constructing of concepts between her and participants whilst conducting the in-depth inquiry may influence the analysis of the narratives. However, human interaction is based on cultural derived structure and therefore meanings are shared (De Vos, 2002, p.298). From a Social Constructionist perspective, it is inevitable that the researcher and her participants will mutually influence each other’s realities (Gergen, 1985) and will therefore co-construct a shared reality.

The researcher will inform the participants that she has prior knowledge to death and bereavement, but that she has no intention of enforcing her personal ideas or meanings on them. Her aim is to co-construct a new reality/shared meaning on death and bereavement and she hopes to gain a better understanding of *their* personal experience.

The focus of inquiry

In qualitative research, the focus of inquiry refers to the people, groups or organizations that are to be studied, that is the ‘who’ as well as the ‘what’ will be studied. In this study, the researcher aims to provide an in-depth interpretation of death and bereavement of a small number of cases. According to De Vos (2002), “where multiple cases are involved it is

referred to as a collective case study” (p.275). In the current study the researcher will use the method of a collective case study to conduct an in-depth inquiry with the three participants. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) claim that case studies are “intensive investigations of particular individuals”, and define case studies as ‘ideographic research methods that study individuals as individuals rather than as members of a population’ (p.255).

The case study approach is ideal for the current study since it may provide rich information about the individuals to be researched. The case study approach allows the researcher “to understand syndromes and situations ‘in depth’” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p. 256).

Selection of cases: It is important for the researcher to have access to the data/ participant. The researcher will gain access to three culturally-diversified South Africans by word of mouth. The researcher will collect information from these three participants by interviewing them and asking them to share their personal stories of death and bereavement with her.

The requirements necessary for selecting the sample of participants for the present study are as follows:

- Firstly the participants need to have experienced a recent loss of a loved one. That is, the loss must be within a year period, and the lost loved one must have been a close family member. The participant must be constructed as ‘bereaved’ by themselves and by others.
- Secondly, the participants will be selected from the same gender, that is all three of the participants will females. These females will be selected on the basis of their particular cultural group and ancestry line. The three cultural groups to be selected are an Indigenous Tswana South African of African descent, a Caucasian Afrikaans South African of European descent, and an Indian Muslim South African of Indian descent.
- Finally, the researcher will have obtained “negotiated consent” verbally and in writing with the participants to share their stories of their bereavement with the researcher (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p.384).

Sampling Method- Qualitative research uses various methods of sampling, and these methods are less strictly applied and less quantified. A non-probability sampling procedure is commonly used in qualitative research. In this case a purposive sampling method will be taken. That is the researcher purposely chooses a sample composed of elements that contain the most characteristics representative of the population (p.207). Denzin and Lincoln (2000, cited in De Vos, 2002) alleged that the qualitative researcher seeks individuals, groups, or settings where the specific processes being structured are most likely to occur. The researcher is interested in the “detailed and in-depth analysis” of the three culturally-diverse people’s experiences, rather than about generalizing her findings to the larger population of South Africa (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p.45).

In qualitative research, information is often gained from one or two cases and these cases are not selected randomly. Each case is usually examined against a backdrop of more universal social experiences and processes. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) maintain “thus to study the particular is to study the general” (cited in De Vos, 2002, p.334). Purposive sampling enables the researcher to think critically about the constraints of the population and then choose the sample base as a result. Since there are a set of specific criteria for the selection of cases in the present study such as the need of people who to have been defined or constructed as bereaved and who fit the description from a particular cultural group, the researcher believes purposive sampling method is best suited for the study.

Information collection Method

In qualitative research, the information collection process entails the researcher gaining access to her subjects, stating how the data will be collected and what techniques and procedures will be used. It also involves setting up dates and times to gather the information (Mouton & Marais, 1990). There are many types of interviews in qualitative studies and in this instance an *unstructured interview*, also known as in-depth interview, will be best suited (De Vos , 2002).

The interview is a “flexible tool” in conducting research, thus, it is ideal as the “main vehicle” to collect data for the current study (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Shaw, 1995, p.230). The interview is also the most commonly used source of data for a constructionist approach. The researcher will conduct a tape recording of each in-depth inquiry. One hour

long appointments will be booked for the inquiry, however since bereavement is of a sensitive nature the interviews may not hold fast to the specified time. The researcher will thus evaluate each setting and will take cognizance of any sensitivity that may arise. The participant's names and places mentioned will be changed to ensure that they remain anonymous.

In-depth interviewing is an ideal and principal method for gathering information in qualitative research such as social research especially if "one is interested in other people's stories" since "stories are a way of knowing" (De Vos, 2002, p. 292). The participant's storytelling in an interview is a process of interaction between the participant and interviewer and is a creation of meaning-making (De Vos, 2002). In-depth interviewing is a successful mode of obtaining large amounts of rich meaningful information (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

De Vos (2002) define a qualitative interview as "attempts to understand the world from the participant's point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences [and] to uncover their lived world to scientific explanations" (p.292). The researcher will attempt to understand the participant's point of view by conversing with them in a space that is deemed comfortable for them.

In-depth inquiries or unstructured one-to-one interviews are considered "a conversation with a purpose" (De Vos, 2002, p.298), and are therefore useful to understand the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of those experiences. In-depth interviewing is not conducted to acquire answers, to test hypothesis, or to evaluate information. On the contrary, the in-depth inquiry allows the researcher to encourage the participants to talk about their perceptions, beliefs and experiences whilst telling their stories, so that she can understand the participants' beliefs and values surrounding death and bereavement. The researcher will take note in the in-depth inquiry of the non verbal communication that may emerge. The researcher will, however, guide the conversation with her participants only to ensure that the information included will be helpful to gain a better understanding of a particular culturally belief or norm. The participants will be informed that at any given time during the study if they feel uncomfortable regarding the conversation or if the study proves to be too emotional they may refuse to continue with the conversation and/or withdraw from the study. If it is

deemed necessary the researcher will refer the participants to a counsellor or a psychologist should the need arise.

The researcher will be engaging and the relationship between the researcher and participants will be “fluid and changing” as well as “constructed” (De Vos, 2002, p. 299). The meanings that are created in the interview will be regarded as “co-constructed between the interviewer and interviewee” (p.153). These meanings that are co-constructed will also be regarded as “products of a larger social system” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p.153).

Data Analysis

Information analysis is the process of bringing “order structure and meaning to the heap of collected data” (De Vos, 2002, p. 340). In the present study, the information will be analyzed from an interpretive approach. In interpretive analysis, the purpose is to “place real-life events and phenomena into some kind of perspective” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p.139).

Miller and Crabtree 1992 (cited in Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p.140) allege that “interpretive analytic styles vary along a continuum from a quasi-statistical style to immersion/crystallization styles”. The current study will make use of the latter style. Thematic content analysis is an immersion/crystallization analysis style, and it allows the researcher to become immersed in the collected data and gain an understanding of the experiences, feelings and meanings that the participants talk about.

Thematic content analysis is a method in qualitative research used to identify key terms and themes in the text, to state themes within the data, to code and categorize them and finally to interpret the information (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An advantage of thematic content analysis is its flexibility, and thus it is not always fixed or “orderly” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p. 140). Thematic analysis is also valuable since it can “summarize key features of a large body of data and offer a thick description of the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.97). The researcher will follow the steps outlined by Terre Blanche and Durrheim, (2002) and Braun and Clarke (2006) to guide her analysis, and combine the five steps cited in Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) and the six phases cited in Braun and Clarke (2006) to perform thematic analysis. The steps/phases are as follows;

- Familiarization and Immersion: Before the data collection commences, ideas and theories are already being developed by the researcher because there is no clear point when the gathering of information stops and when analysis begins. The first step requires the researcher to familiarize and immerse herself in the raw data. Since the researcher will transcribe the data herself, she will have the opportunity to familiarize and reflect on the data collected. She will read and re-read the unanalyzed material until she is completely familiar with the data (Braun & Clark, 2006; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).
- Generating initial codes: Coding is part of the analysis that breaks down data into “discrete parts and categories” and examines the “similarities and differences” between them (De Vos, 2002, p. 346). Terre Blanche and Durrheim, (2002, p.143) explain the coding procedure as breaking down

“a body of data (text domain) into labelled, meaningful pieces, with a view to later clustering the ‘bits’ of coded material under the code heading and further analysing them both as a cluster and in relation to other clusters. This may be done simultaneously as the themes are being highlighted”.

Essentially whilst coding, the researcher marks sections of the data such as phrases, lines ideas and events as being interesting or relevant to the phenomenon being studied. The researcher will “code inclusively and look for as many potential themes/patterns as possible” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.89). Coding individual extracts may fit into one or more themes and thus an extract may be “uncoded, coded once or coded many times as relevant”(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.89) Extracts will be grouped together under a specific heading or theme, and then will be further analyzed in relation to other headings. If the data does not fit within the coding scheme, then the coding scheme will be changed since a coding scheme must be designed in such a way so as to give the most insight into the issue being researched (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

- **Inducing themes:** In this stage, the researcher will analyze the codes and sort the different codes into possible themes. The researcher will look at the relationship between the codes and between the themes. It is in this phase that some codes may become major themes and some may become subthemes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.90). The researcher will think in terms of “processes, functions, tensions and contradictions” and will endeavour not to “summarize” the content (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p. 143). It is important for the researcher to “play around” with various themes and will take into account that the themes obtained from her data will be directly related to the original research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p.143).
- **Elaboration and Reviewing themes:** Examining the themes of the research is referred to as “elaboration”, which entails the researcher to explore each theme in great detail, to “capture the finer nuances” which the researcher did not initially capture (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p.144). The researcher should keep going back to review and refine her coded data extracts and assess whether they are adequate. It could mean that the researcher’s original coding system must be changed and /or enlarged to cater for the new “nuances”. In essence, elaboration means one must “keep coding, elaborating and recoding until no further new insights appear to emerge” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002. p. 91). Once the coded themes form a “coherent pattern”, the researcher will move on to the next phase of defining and naming the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.91).
- **Defining and naming themes:** Once an appropriate thematic map has been developed, the researcher will refine and define the themes. The real meaning of each theme and the meaning of all the themes together will be identified and analyzed. It is in this phase that themes may develop subthemes (themes-within-a-theme), which may give structure to a large or intricate theme. The given titles of the themes will then be reconsidered for the final analysis.
- **Interpretation and producing the report:** In the final step, a written description of that which the researcher has studied will be expanded using the ‘thematic categories’ she drew out from her analysis. The report will be a concise, explicit “account of the story the data tell - within and across the themes” (Braun& Clarke, 2006, p.93). It is in this

final stage that the researcher will also “reflect on her own role” in the data collection and interpretation creation (p. 93). Since the researcher has a preconceived idea of death, when she interprets the material she must be aware of her own personal experience of death and bereavement and how it may influence the way she collected the material and analyzed it (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

With interpretive research the aim is “to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p.139), and interpretive analysis is a ‘back and forth movement between the strange and the familiar’ (p.140). The above-mentioned guidelines of content analysis will enable the conversations to be analyzed coherently and thereby produce a “compelling account” of the phenomenon of death and bereavement (p.140).

Conclusion

This chapter commenced with a brief outline of the concept methodology. The research design, namely Social Constructionism, was provided. A discussion of the research method was fully given. It was established that a qualitative methodology was most suitable for the current research study since it fits in well with the Social Constructionist framework. The basic principles of qualitative research were indicated and explained. A holistic approach of exploring the complex system in its full entity was mentioned. It was mentioned too that qualitative research focuses on the personal stories of individuals: their thoughts and feelings and alternative truths. In essence, Social Constructionists don’t believe there is one singular truth or reality. A brief explanation of the importance of ethical concerns and values were highlighted. The terms ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ were classified from a Social Constructionist research perspective, as well as how dependability can be achieved through rich and detailed description. How the collective case study of three participants, who are constructed as bereaved, were to be selected was detailed and the purposive sampling method was explicitly described. A justification of the in-depth inquiry as the best method used to collect the information from the participants was also stated. Finally, a detailed account was given of how thematic content analysis is a suitable method to analyze and interpret data collected.

CHAPTER 5

AMANDA'S NARRATIVE: NEVER-ENDING LOSS

Personal data

Participant	:	Amanda
Ancestry	:	Caucasian from European descent
Race	:	Afrikaans Caucasian South African woman
Age	:	61
Occupation	:	Bookkeeper
Research Setting:		Interviews conducted from Amanda's home.

Introduction

In chapter 5, a transcribed conversation between the participant and the researcher is analyzed. Prominent themes that emerged from the narration are highlighted. Since the major themes highlighted interweave with other themes that are highlighted, they may seem to overlap with each other. The researcher acknowledges that the themes highlighted are those that she has defined through her knowledge of death and bereavement. It is essential to emphasize that the following themes do not represent a determined or single truth concerning bereaved people. Fundamentally there are multiple truths out there, and another researcher's analysis may feature additional themes that are not represented in the present study. The original transcribed interview is available upon request.

Amanda's Narrative

Within three days, Amanda had experienced three deaths, namely those of her mother, her sister-in-law and her mother-in-law. Three months after these mentioned deaths Amanda's aunt passed away suddenly. When Amanda narrates her experience of bereavement, her story skips from one loss to another and includes other losses she also had. These other losses include her late husband who passed away seven years ago, her father, six years ago, her grandparents, and finally her brother who passed away when Amanda was 23years old. Her personal story of bereavement thus incorporates each of the different losses, and consequently each theme embraces her compound losses.

The following themes were identified from Amanda's story of her multiple losses:

Death Perception and Beliefs

Death has laid its hand on many of Amanda's loved ones. The reality of death and the intrusion of death is no stranger to Amanda. She has lost her brother, her husband, her father, her mother, her aunt, her grandparents and many members of her husband's family. Death has been an unwelcome intruder in Amanda life since an early age; her first major loss, was that of her 14-year-old brother when she was only 23years old. Amanda has therefore had many occasions to think about death and question what death means to her. She bluntly stated:

“Well I'm not scared of dying”

Amanda's beliefs and her philosophy regarding death can be considered personal rather than traditional or cultural. Amanda seemed to view death as a natural phenomenon. Her attitude towards death was “matter of fact” and she stated that she was not afraid to die:

“Because it's the normal... it's the circle of life, at some time it's going to happen to all of us we don't know when. So that's my motto. I'm not really scared of dying”.

Viewing the context of the constant exposure to death, one is tempted to assume that this may have contributed to her accepting death and dying, so naturally. However, Amanda negated that reflection and admitted that she had the character to acknowledge and comprehend death.

Amanda's mother died 11 months ago but nevertheless her particular disposition enabled her to come to terms with the loss of her mother. She stated:

“No, I think I'm a person that can deal... with stuff like that. It took me a while for me to get used to that... she's not here anymore but like I said I can... I can deal with death”.

Amanda's philosophy regarding the sick and dying is quite forthright and realistic. Her outlook suggested that she could be harsh concerning the loss of her loved ones who were sick and who had no quality of life. The constant exposure to multiple losses seemed to have prepared her to act practically and rationally. She said:

“So I think in a way if someone is suffering I won't pray for them to get well if they can't get well. But you must be realistic. I mean, I know there's... miracles can happen but you must be realistic I mean... I am a realistic person. I think that's why, yes, yes, I can't hope for something that I know it's not possible, so... I mean I don't sound heartless or... That's my way of seeing, looking at things. You must accept the reality”.

Although Amanda showed concern that she could be considered “heartless” regarding her indifference towards the loss of a loved one, she acknowledged that this was specifically her attitude towards those loved ones who may never recover from an illness. Her reflection therefore highlighted her personal beliefs. It reflected too the awareness of a false hope that family members may have concerning a dying loved one. Recalling when her mother had had a heart attack and was dying in a hospital, she said:

“It was uh, it was bad you know. At that stage I had hoped she is going to survive but on the one side I knew, and by the fifth or sixth day I started praying she will die because I could see she was suffering, she had a lot of pain and she was in a coma and my brother and my sister they didn't want to believe she is not going to get better. I think it was because they weren't involved when the attack happened and both of them

are the kind of people that can convince themselves, especially my brother everything is going to be alright. Well... and my sister believed till the end and even my brother, to the end and I had to put my feelings sort of aside”.

Amanda’s sense of sensibility and realism regarding people who are ill and suffering was highlighted again when she described her grandfather’s and her sister-in-law’s dying process:

“Um I feel if someone is suffering, uh I don’t.... feel so bad if they die because it’s not nice to suffer, I mean he couldn’t breathe my grandfather and Lola that’s my sister-in-law that died, she was diabetic. She was always swollen and she had this... uh, uh, she couldn’t drive anymore because she was slipping into this little coma and she had quite a lot of pain....”

The exploration of Amanda’s perceptions and beliefs points to her levelheadedness and truthfulness regarding death and dying. The constant exposure to the suffering, illness and death of a close loved one seems to have contributed to her truthful outlook. Consequently, her rational viewpoint on suffering has assisted her through her multiple losses that she has experienced and it has served as a positive coping mechanism throughout her many bereavements.

Amanda’s philosophy on death includes a belief in the afterlife. She admitted that there was life after death however Amanda demonstrated uncertainty regarding the characteristics of the afterlife. She said:

“I believe there will be a better place after this but how it’s going to be, I haven’t a clue. I ask this question more than once. If you have been married more than once, I don’t think you will be like you were on earth. I mean what are you going to do if you’ve been married three times”?

Amanda seemed to be concerned about who one’s ‘true’ husband one would be in the afterlife if one was married three times. The concept of ‘marriage in the afterlife’ seemed to indicate some sort of ‘social life’ in the life thereafter, therefore implying that death is not the end. Although she believed one goes to a good place when one dies, she was not too sure of

who in actual fact would be going to this place. She called this place “some place nice” and wished too that she would go there. She said:

“Well, I hope... well some place nice but how or where I haven’t got a clue and I don’t worry about it. I think only people that didn’t do bad things, I think most people...,if they ask for forgiveness if they did something terrible they will get to this place but people that just got no conscience or you know do terrible things to other people I don’t think there will be a place for them”.

Amanda presumed her late husband’s, spirit which she had sensed at the time of his death, had gone to a “good place”. She said:

“Yes, I suppose it should be a good place because I felt good about it... I mean there’s a thing I’m not sure about. Uh will he be in heaven when Christ is coming in the end? Is he already there? Is there someplace where you in transit? Either that or I don’t know”.

Amanda seemed vague regarding where his spirit had ‘gone’ and where his spirit was now. It showed her bewilderment and uncertainty concerning the afterlife. In spite of her confusion about the afterlife, the references to ‘heaven’ and ‘Christ’ indicated Amanda’s religious belief system.

Amanda did acknowledge that her belief system is based on Christianity. Amanda implied that people of the Christian faith believe that when a person dies, the spirit has a destiny which she described as heaven. She implied that if one is good, one will go to “heaven”, but for those who do not “ask for forgiveness” there would not be a “place” for them in the afterlife.

Amanda however seemed unsure as to whether she was “good” enough to go there when she died. She said laughingly:

No, I think so well I hope I’m going to a good place”.

Amanda's description of where she thought her late husband went after death implied that her late husband was 'good'. The terms "good" and "heaven" and "some place nice" and "forgiveness" were typically religious talk and it indicated Amanda's specific religious ideology.

Prayer, a factor in some religions, is typical of Amanda's Christian faith and is something she resorted to when her family members were ill especially her mother. She recalled:

"That's why I say at one time I had started praying she will die because I knew I could see her suffering you know. Her kidneys failing and when they treated the kidneys, the heart failed and when they treated the heart, the kidneys you know, so..."

Amanda did not pray for her family members to recover who were too ill to recover, like her grandfather, sister in law and mother. Rather, she prayed that they would be relieved of their suffering and when her mother was suffering from the effects of a heart attack she felt it necessary to pray for her death too because:

"It was bad uh, it was bad you know. At that stage I had hoped she is going to survive but on the one side I knew, and by the fifth or sixth day I started praying she will die because I could see she was suffering, she had quite a lot of pain and she was in a coma..."

In Christianity, there is anticipation and an expectancy that God would heal a loved one, therefore Amanda *hoped* that her mother would survive, revealing her faith in God. However, as mentioned earlier, Amanda considered herself to be "realistic" and when she saw the frailty of her mother she wanted the suffering of her mother to be relieved. The recurring announcement concerning her mother's suffering as well as the suffering of others reiterates her strict conviction of not praying for recovery, if recovery is unlikely. She declared:

"Yes, that's why I say at one stage I had started praying she will die because I knew, I could see her suffering you know, Her kidneys failing...So I think if someone is suffering, I won't really pray for them to get well if they can't get well".

The act of praying and hope she experienced are indications of Amanda's faith. Amanda also had a belief in miracles, which she mentioned when she spoke of being "realistic". A belief in miracles is customary for Christian people. Amanda admitted that it was her faith in Christianity that had helped her not to fear death.

The perception of the dead person, according to Amanda, is quite simple. The deceased person is not present in the physical world anymore and that is why she believed that there is no sense in going to the grave to speak to the deceased person. Amanda said;

"I think they feel close to the person but in my mind there's nothing. You can just sit in your house and speak to that person or photograph. No, there's nothing, there's just dust or whatever. No, you can, uh, if you want to speak to your loved one, you can just sit in front of a photograph or in your house, in your bedroom or whatever. It's not necessary to sit at the grave because there's nothing there"

According to Amanda, since there was "nothing" in the grave, it therefore seemed senseless and useless to "speak" to an empty grave and thus she herself did not perform that act.

Amanda did acknowledge a belief in spirits and ghosts (animism) but felt that one could not be possessed by them. She also had dreams of her lost loved ones. It seemed that she experienced her late husband's spirit when he passed away seven years ago. She sensed his spirit after his death and had evidently conversed with his spirit. She described her experience as:

"A spirit can I think linger a bit because um a month or so after Norman died, I for about two/three weeks every night I had this same dream and I woke up and I heard him speaking to me. I really heard his voice that's why I woke up and ... he was just here, he was right here. One day in my dream I heard him and... he was walking around and I was talking to him but he didn't say one single, single word".

Amanda dreamt of her late husband and believed that not only was he present in her dreams, but that his spirit was directly with her. There was, however, some confusion as to whether he was really there in the spirit or if he was only present in her dreams. She recalled:

“... I remember I told him in my dream “I’m sorry I had to sell all your cattle and all your tractors and so on but... you told me before you”... A few months before he died he told me “If ever I die you mustn’t go on with the farming it’s too hard”. And I was saying sorry because..., now he’s back and there’s nothing left of his stuff and then I woke up with his voice in my ears. And I had that dream for weeks and just one day... it was gone and he never returned. So I think in a way he was here somewhere... just to see for himself if I was alright and everything is fine and when everything was sold, you know he just disappeared. I never had that dream again and I never heard his voice in my sleep”.

It appeared that the spirit of her late husband had left the living world and had gone to a “good place” as mentioned earlier. She apparently had no more contact with her departed husband’s spirit thereafter. Once she had complied with her husband’s wishes of selling all his goods and so forth, the deceased spirit had departed. She said:

“Yes, no he is not here anymore. No..., after everything was sold and everything was in place and so on, didn’t feel him anymore. He’s gone, I wasn’t upset about it. Actually *I* was more upset feeling him somewhere around. In a way it was better for me when he was gone then I knew..., okay he must be satisfied what I’m doing and he’s happy and everything is fine, so he..., finally left.

Although Amanda had this particular experience with her deceased husband’s spirit, she stated explicitly that she did not believe in mediums or the calling up of the spirits. She adamantly denied their existence and stated:

“No, no contact, there’s no ways I don’t believe this calling up of spirits and this speaking to a medium or... no, no sorry. I don’t believe that stuff sitting around this table and something is jumping up... and this woman is speaking in a strange voice or whatever. No sorry”

Amanda had stated that initially she was sceptical about believing in spirits. It was established that there’s a belief that the deceased spirit can have contact with the living world within other cultures. Amanda, however, considered her experience to have been a personal one and not a culturally-orientated one. Amanda also displayed uncertainty as to whether she

did indeed have a real encounter with her husband's spirit or whether it was a figment of her imagination. She stated:

“Yes it's a personal experience or something. Like I said I never believed in something like that before but when I... really, I felt this here on this yard for a while. But I didn't believe in something like that. But now, I believe it's possible but I don't think everybody is experiencing it. Perhaps it was my conscience because I didn't feel everything at first. Maybe it was my conscience doing that, I don't know, but I really felt he was here”.

Amanda and her late husband had farmed part-time, and six months after he died she discontinued the farming, cancelling the contract of hiring the farm and sold all the cattle. Dreaming of her late husband and having conversations with his spirit helped Amanda make sense of his death and sensed his approval with the decisions she had made concerning the farming and his personal belongings. She acknowledged that the dreams were “therapeutic” for her and said:

“Yes, yes because at one stage when he didn't come back in my dreams, I, I felt now he was now satisfied and I'm fine so he can go wherever he's going. That's what I felt. So I think there's a possibility that a spirit can linger on but I don't believe in real ghosts uh that can possess you or something. That's something in your mind that's causing that. I may be wrong but how I feel. I never come into a house or somewhere and I felt there's something, never”.

Amanda only had this particular experience with her late husband's spirit and never experienced it again. She had a very close relationship with her mother and her aunt but she did not experience anything like it when they had both passed away.

Amanda's *beliefs* regarding the *deceased's belongings* were simple and practical. When her mother passed away, the room at the old age home was promptly vacated and her personal belongings such as clothing were given to the needy in a large city. She did this too with her aunt's belongings. She said:

“Um, yes, because we had to remove all her stuff out of the old age home because they needed the room. So..., I just gave all the clothes to a settlement near Pretoria because I, I didn’t want to see anyone where we stay with her favourite dress”. Well we buried her in her favourite dress but I didn’t want to see someone walking here with one of her dresses on and we did the same with Aunty Rachael’s stuff. I didn’t give it to some church here I sent it to Pretoria”.

Amanda did not hold on to any possessions belonging to her lost loved ones. She simply relinquished any memorabilia regarding her mother. She recalled:

“And you know, it was sad seeing all her stuff, stuff that she had treasured and for me it’s just ‘junk’. That was the worst. Yes, all the Christmas cards and birthday cards, I had to throw everything away because it’s no value to me”.

Amanda displayed some sadness regarding the disposal of her loved ones possessions, but there is no hesitation towards discarding items that seemed worthless to her. She said:

“Yes, Yes like I said I’m not really a sentimental person, I can throw stuff easily away, and Norman, he used to keep everything and I felt bad every time I threw something of his that is in my eyes is rubbish”.

Amanda did not portray sentimentality with regards to personal possessions and can therefore be regarded as essentially unemotional towards the possessions of her deceased loved ones.

Mourning Procedures and Practices

Since *rituals* and *ceremonies* are mourning practices that are combined with various mourning procedures, they are both added as subthemes under the theme mourning procedure.

The procedures involving the body, according to Amanda, seemed to be personal rather than cultural. It was not established as to whether any cleansing rituals were necessary or if they should be performed immediately after the death of a loved one. However, Amanda believed

that if one was present when a loved one passed away it was not necessary for one to say goodbye to the deceased in the coffin before the church and funeral procession. She said:

“Um, I didn’t go to my mother’s coffin or my father’s because I was there... while, I was there while my father was busy dying, and my mother died before my sister and me could get to the hospital, and it’s not a pretty sight.”

But when her late husband passed away, Amanda and her daughter did have personal contact with the deceased at the funeral parlour. Amanda did take part in the grooming of her late husband at the funeral parlour, together with one of her daughters. Her late husband’s death was sudden and it seemed that her children had not seen their father for some time and she felt the need for them to say goodbye to his deceased body. She recalled;

“Um, with Norman, I was here when he died, but I went to the parlour before the service for my children because they wanted to see him for the last time and I went with them otherwise I wouldn’t have”.

Amanda implied that it was a personal decision for each individual to make as to whether they want to say goodbye to the deceased or not at the funeral parlour. She indicated too, that it could however be a “shocking” experience. She said:

“I suppose it is, in a way it depends on how the person looked when he died. I mean Norman, he just looked like he was sleeping, there was no... he just looked like he was sleeping. My mother and father didn’t look good. I remember the first time I saw my grandmother... and I was shocked. I couldn’t believe it’s my grandmother in that coffin and I decided I’ll never do that again..., and I didn’t until Norman died. But I went along for my children’s sake because they weren’t here when he died but I didn’t want to... they wanted to go there the day after he died and I, I refused and I said no, there’s no way. I wanted the funeral parlour to you know do everything that’s necessary and I told them they can go before the service”

Before the church service of her late husband, Amanda did go with her two daughters to the parlour and described how her daughter had contact with the deceased body and that it was beneficial for her daughter. She recalled:

“And I remember Janette she was so angry because they didn’t comb his hair like normally, and the woman, she gave Janette a brush and said “Ok, sorry I didn’t know how you used to do it, so here is a brush”. Janette took the brush and she did it like it used to be. And he had this purple bib around his neck and she demanded them to remove it because her father would have “died” wearing a bib and she took it off”

However, Amanda’s son did not want to see Norman’s body at the parlour since he had apparently seen his father a few days before his father had passed away. Amanda said that although her son had not “said goodbye”, it did not have a negative impact on the way he had grieved the loss of his father. She did however claim that it was “good” for her daughter when she participated in the grooming of Norman’s body in the coffin. She said:

“No not really, no but I think for Janette it was. It was very good for her because she was actually touching him and that’s still a horrible feeling anyway, like a marble statue in that, in that coffin. So, it’s not actually it’s not a very nice experience”

Amanda indicated that there are *no prescribed rules as to the wearing of certain clothing to funerals* or what is *required of a widow/widower*. She acknowledged that many years ago there were certain prescribed rules as to what a person wore to funerals and rules that widows had to abide to, but believed that in our modern times it was not expected anymore. She explained:

“A helluva lot of years ago a widow had to wear black for at least a year and had to stay at home and not go anywhere. So I wore black but it’s because I like wearing black. I didn’t wear black not because I had to. I wore black and bright red... so. I wouldn’t wear black because it’s expected of me. If I wear black at a funeral, it just by chance because most of my clothes in my cupboard are black or something with black in it. So I don’t think, uh the thing of you to wear black, is not valid anymore, not in my eyes anyway.

Being involved first-hand with the *funeral arrangements* of those close to her was important for Amanda to understand her loss, come to terms with her grief and to obtain closure. She stated:

“Yes, yes, you feel more, how can I express this, you feel like you are a part of the whole thing and you understand the loss better. Like when my husband died I did everything myself. I phoned most of the people myself and if somebody phoned me I spoke to everyone. I didn’t tell anyone no, I can’t speak to them. I spoke to everybody that phoned and I also phoned most of the people... to tell them about it”.

Amanda stated again that it was necessary to be a part of the funeral arrangements because:

“I would have felt like an outsider and just went along with this whole thing, so I had to go through all the bad stuff”.

Amanda had been away when her aunt passed away and all the funeral preparations had already been arranged when she arrived back home. Attending the funeral she had not helped to arrange had an adverse effect on her. She described it as:

“I think if I had been here and saw her in her bed, you know it would have been... better for me. So when I came back the week after just before her funeral and I didn’t do any of the arranging for her funeral... so if I had a part in the arrangements of the funeral everything would have been a bit better”.

It is therefore very important for Amanda to be a part of the funeral arrangements and she admitted that it hindered her grieving for her aunt because she was not involved. She said:

“For me I can’t just be a bystander, it’s not my nature...that’s why it took me so long to get over that.. I am the kind of person I must be involved in the whole process. I can’t just be on the side lines. That’s my way”

Being physically involved in the funeral arrangements is therefore crucial for Amanda since it benefitted her emotionally. It seemed that if others had arranged the funerals of those close to her, it would have taken her longer to grieve her loss. It seemed too that the preoccupation with the funeral arrangements is Amanda’s primary mode of grieving.

Concerning the deaths in Amanda's close circle, *Amanda was in personal contact with the undertakers* in respect of all the funeral arrangements. She believed one needed to be capable and that it was a personal issue as to whether one could take charge of funeral arrangements or not. Her first one she had undertaken to arrange was for her father-in-law's funeral when she was quite young. She said:

“Yes, some people are not able to do that and they are crying too much and they... don't, they're like... useless, excuse the word, I don't mean it sounding bad but they're useless and if I ... the first funeral I arranged was my father in law's when I was in my early twenties. So it's no strange thing for me to arrange a funeral because my mother in law she was in a state, so I phoned everybody and I phoned the minister and made all the arrangements and so on”

Recollecting the funeral preparation of her late husband, she proudly stated that she took complete control and arranged the whole funeral. She recalled:

“The funeral, except for the actual death of the person, the funeral is the second worst step of the way... It must be over as quickly as possible. I did everything from A to Z. It was arranging for the coffin, the type of coffin, the type of service we wanted, the flowers on the coffin and we had the minister there and we decided together with the minister what uh, songs or whatever we wanted and so on. So I was involved in the whole process the funeral, except for the actual death of the person, the funeral is the second worst step of the way... It must be over as quickly as possible”

Ceremonies

Amanda described the service of her sister-in-law's funeral (the funeral service that she did not arrange) as horrific. She recalled:

“I know when we were at my sister in law's church service, it was horrible. Well for me, because there was a video showing before the service, uh of her when she was a young little girl until up to nearly the time she died. There were photographs of her all over the place. (She sighs). It was horrible for me”

It seemed that the service for Lola's funeral, the photographs and videos may have been too "touching" for Amanda and it therefore induced an emotional response which Amanda was not prepared to display.

Amanda's description of a typical funeral practice did not include specific cultural factors. Her Afrikaans cultural background did not seem to have any relevance to the funeral procedures she took control of. Her individuality is depicted in the personal opinion she has regarding funeral practices. She said;

"Well, I don't know, not for me anyway, I don't really think there's really "do's" and "don'ts". I know a lot of people, there's photographs of the person who died in the church and there's even videos showing..., uh I'm not like that I prefer it to be simple and to be over quickly and as simple as possible".

However, it seemed that her immediate and extended family also shared her attitude regarding funeral preparations. Hence, her particular funeral rituals may be considered both personal and culturally orientated. She admitted;

"Yes, yes we are all like that".

Rituals

Regarding Amanda's bereavements, *rituals* do not seem to be a huge priority. Amanda took her late mother to the graveyard to visit her late father's and late brothers and grandparent's grave. They took flowers and clean water for the flowers. Water was also taken to clean and tidy the graves. These visits were often at the anniversaries of the deceased's deaths, the birthdays and the wedding anniversaries. She said;

"It was their uh their uh..., the day they died, yes..., and um all the anniversaries or whatever. She wanted to go..., and put flowers..., their wedding day and their birthdays".

Amanda only went to the grave out of duty to her mother and indicated that it was not an emotional experience for her in any way. She said;

“Yes, it was important to my mother, a ritual for my mother, yes, no not for me. I did it for her, not for me”.

Since her mother’s death, Amanda had not been to the graveyard. She had experienced feelings of guilt which stemmed from the fact that she had not yet erected a tombstone for her late mother, nor had she kept the graves tidy or neat.

With regards to the *ashes* of the cremated person, Amanda stated that one should honour the deceased wishes. It is a ritual the bereaved and survivors are obligated to abide to. Before Amanda’s late husband passed away, he and Amanda had a discussion about what he would like her do with his ashes. She recalled:

“Uh, we um..., last year we went to his place of birth and we threw Norman’s ashes in the Zambezi river. That’s where... I once jokingly asked him um where he wants his ashes to be and he... well it was said in a joke and he said “Well I’d like my ashes to be thrown out in the Zambezi”. That’s where he came from and we did it. We went out to the Zambia side at the Vic Falls and we threw his ashes in the helluva lot of water and I told my children they can do with my ashes what they want. I’d prefer it to be thrown out into the sea or something”

Visiting the grave of the deceased, a ritual often implemented by many during their bereavement and at various anniversaries, has no bearing on Amanda. On many occasions she had mentioned that she had no interest in going to the grave of a loved one. She said:

“I got no, I got no... I’ve got nothing to go to a grave and sit there and talk to that person that died because there is nothing. No, because there is nothing. I mean you know since my mother’s death and her been buried, I’ve never been back to her grave. I reminded myself it was quite a shock, sherebet it’s nearly a year and I never been there since after the funeral”.

Amanda did admit that on the first anniversaries of certain occasions, her sadness was highlighted regarding her late husband. She recalled;

‘Uh, his first birthday after... the first Christmas and our first anniversary and so on, it was bad those times but after the first of everything, I just ... it’s okay I remember it was his birthday or whatever but... it’s okay’.

Since she only experienced sadness when these occasions were remembered and there were no particular rituals carried out, it reveals therefore that rituals during her bereavement are not a major concern for her.

Cremation vs. Burial

Amanda had been directly involved with the funeral and cremation procedures concerning many of the deaths that she has experienced.

Amanda was in control of many of the funerals of the losses that she had experienced. Included in the funeral or memorial procedure, was a church service, which Amanda firmly believed was to be a straightforward affair. Whether one should be cremated or buried Amanda considered this to be a personal one. Her mother, her father and her brother were all buried. She said:

“Yes she was buried because um she and my father... and the stone um and she was buried on top....”

It seems that her late mother and late father shared a double grave. They were buried next to her late brother. However, her late Aunt Rachael was cremated. She explained:

“Aunty Rachael was cremated, she told me she wanted to because her husband Ivan was also cremated and Norman was cremated and “I want to be... I want to be, I don’t want to be put in the ground. Uh I don’t want a grave to visit because there’s nothing there. It’s just... I don’t know”. Yes, I can’t see anything wrong with cremation. It’s just being to ashes sooner and there’s nothing in the grave”.

Throughout Amanda’s story, she indicated an aversion to the grave and to be buried in a grave. She preferred to be cremated. Amanda implied that the decision as to whether one was

to be cremated or buried was an individual and personal one and that the burial or cremation should be executed at the request of the deceased.

Bereavement Behaviour

Under the theme of bereavement, the subthemes *emotional* and *physical responses* to death, the *duration and period of grief* are highlighted.

Amanda's initial response to her mother's death was to *delay her grief* in order to be there for her siblings. Her siblings had very different reactions to the death of their mother, with her sister's immediate response being devastation, while her brother showed no feelings at all.

Emotional and physical responses

Amanda displayed *various emotional* and *physical responses* to the deaths that she had experienced. She consciously attempted to control her *emotional responses* and "willed herself not to cry" unless she was in the privacy of her home. Amanda dealt with the multiple deaths in the life by inhibiting her grieving. She said:

"In a way, I told myself not to grieve, that's my way of dealing with these deaths. I told myself not to cry because if a cry I can't be there for other people ... that's crying".

When Amanda's mother passed away, initially Amanda had delayed her grieving since her brother and sister had not been realistic about their mother's illness, and her sister was "devastated" when her mother passed away. Amanda says she:

"Had to deal with them, both of them are the kind of person that can convince themselves, especially my brother, everything is going to be alright. So instead of um grieving about everything I had to be there for them", I had to put my feelings sort of aside".

Amanda was very busy with the arrangements for her mother's funeral and only began to grieve the loss of her mother after the funeral. She recalled:

“No, it was about a week after she died, I started you know. When I normally when I left the office I will just stop at the old age home every second day normally and I more than once I found myself stopping in front of the old age home and then I..., just no, but she is not here anymore so... it took a while for me to get used to that... she is not”.

When Amanda experienced the multiple losses three days apart she stated that she did not grieve the three successive losses immediately. She experienced delayed grief for her sister-in-law and it was not evident if she had indeed grieved her mother-in-law at all. She said:

“I didn’t have time to grieve my mother in law and in a way I’m grieving now for my sister in law because we got on very well. I didn’t have time to do that because it was first my mother then it was my aunt three months later”.

It appeared that she found it extremely difficult to come to grips with the multiple losses in such a short period of time. She said:

“Yes... so, I think in a way I told myself not to grieve, that’s my way of dealing with these deaths. That’s how I go”.

When her late husband died seven years ago, she stated that she had to put her emotions aside for her in-laws and her family. It appeared that she wanted to give them the support and comfort she felt they needed. She said:

“Yes I had to do that because when Norman died I had to do the same for his family, for his mother and for my children”.

Although Amanda managed to put her feelings aside for the sake of her family the death of her husband had a traumatic effect on her. She recalled:

“Yes, I think that was, that was one of the worst things that ever happened in my life. It was my brother dying when he was 14 and then it was Norman. You know, it was over in seconds...from the moment he told me he wasn’t feeling well and you know it was just like this...”

Whilst Amanda was away, her Aunt, with whom she was very close, had suddenly passed away three months after her mother died. Since Amanda was not present or involved with the funeral arrangements and because of the fact that her aunt's death had been so sudden, a flood of emotions which she had inhibited since her brother's death, burst open. She recalled:

"I even grieved her more than my mother. I got over my mother much quicker than Aunty Rachael. Uh..., Aunty Rachael I saw her on Saturday. I had to go and look after my first granddaughter, the next, that weekend until the next Friday. And the Tuesday morning Clara phoned me and said "Aunty Rachael died in her sleep, so that was worse for me than my mother dying and even now..." There was nothing wrong with her. I saw her Saturday and you know she was like a bird hopping all over the place and telling me..., She told me there was nothing wrong with her she was only using a high blood pressure pill and she was fine. She looked fine and she just died in her sleep".

Amanda therefore found it difficult to come to terms with her aunt's death because she was not there when her aunt passed away and because she had no involvement in her aunt's funeral.

Thus it seemed that being present at the death of a loved one and to also to be fully involved in the funeral arrangements are two important factors in the grieving process for Amanda. She said:

"So I think it it's better to be there.... if something happens, so you can deal with it because I can deal with stuff like that. No hysterics or, you know something like that. I prefer if someone near to me dies..., to rather to be there than be told by somebody else. You know, like a phone call in the middle of the night telling me one of my children or my mother or brother or something. Like I remember the day my father uh told me about my brother's death. I can still see his horrible... horrible look on his face. You know when he was standing in the room in the hospital here, when I saw his face the first thing that came to my mind is... Norman died you know.... and I asked him "is Norman alright"? and he said "No, your brother died". So, I think that was one of the worst moments of my whole life was when I was told".

The horror of that day thus had a lasting impact on Amanda and in order to cope with death, Amanda stated that she must be directly engaged in the dying process of a loved one and be fully absorbed in the funeral procedures.

When it came to displaying her emotions Amanda thought that she was not like other people since she did not show her emotions openly. She stated:

“I don’t think I am so normal, I don’t think I am very normal to most people”

It seemed that Amanda’s late mother and her sister were alike in displaying their grief with emotion, but that she and her brother were more like their late father, who tended not show their emotion. She said:

“Me and my brother, well he’s worse than me, he’ll show no emotion whatsoever”.

It appeared that Amanda, her immediate family and her siblings were not like other families since they displayed little or rather no emotion when they grieved. She said:

“Uh they will probably think we don’t show much emotion or something...”Yes, I personally think sometimes we are a bit weird or other people think we’re weird”.

Specific emotional responses such as *relief*, *guilt*, *anger*, *shock*, *sadness* and *crying* were experienced by Amanda during her losses and thereafter.

Amanda felt “*relief*” when her mother passed away because her mother had been ill and suffering. Amanda also lost her grandfather when she was in Grade 12, but she stated that he was sickly before his death, and therefore his death was a *relief* and that she had only felt sadness towards his death.

Amanda herself did not experience any *guilt* when her mother’s passed away. She stated that she had only experienced a feeling of guilt lately because she had not been to the grave to erect a tombstone or to clean the grave. Amanda did however experience the emotion of guilt when her late husband passed away, because she felt she should have been more persistent about him going to the doctor. She recalled:

“At one stage after my husband died, I felt guilty, I told myself I should have done more to get him to a doctor but I know I couldn’t force him”.

Guilt it seemed was an emotion that was felt when one had failed in some aspect regarding the deceased. Concerning why her sister supposedly found it difficult to resolve her grief of the death of her mother she said:

“I think in a way she feels guilty... because she wasn’t here. She wasn’t here that’s the whole thing with my sister that thing that she wasn’t here, she couldn’t do more so she’s feeling guilty. So I think I’d rather be... like I am, than feel guilty about something”

It seemed her sister did indeed do all that she could considering the fact she lived in another country and a contradiction was made concerning her sister and her sister’s alleged guilt by saying:

“She is a very compassionate person. She has no reason to feel guilty”.

Guilt was therefore equated with ‘works’. Amanda subtly insinuated that if one was physically involved with the caring, nursing and supporting of the deceased before their death (like Amanda was) then there would be no need for feelings of guilt.

In viewing the various losses that Amanda has experienced, the emotion of *anger* was raised frequently. Amanda was angry when her husband passed away seven years ago. Anger was directed towards him and she cites that she is still angry with him at present. She felt that had he consulted a doctor about his illness he would not have had a heart attack and died. She recalled:

“Oh well, when my husband died I was angry, I am still angry. I think because he knew there was something wrong with him and if I asked him what’s wrong or shouldn’t he go to a doctor he refused. So in a way I’m still angry with him because if he went to the doctor he would have still been alive today”.

It seems that when Amanda's husband passed away, the emotion of anger was very prominent and later it was used as a coping mechanism during her bereavement. She said:

"I was angry at Norman, I felt he, he didn't have to die. He could have lived longer. I think that was the biggest thing that helped me through his death... my anger. I'm not so angry anymore. I'm just angry sometimes. I got over it".

Amanda seemed confused as to whether she was still angry with her late husband or not. By her own admission, her anger was a tool she used to get over her husband. Since, she is still angry at him for dying it may therefore seem that she has not completely resolved her grief concerning her husband's death. Amanda did however state that she had indeed grieved for her husband. She said:

"Yes, no if I cried, I cried by myself and like I said I had a lot of anger in me. I look at his photographs and you know I talk to him and I was angry but only when I was on my own. Never in front of the children and they did their grieving in their own as well".

Her children appeared to take the death of their father very hard and it seemed that her children were still trying to come to terms with the loss of their father even though he passed away seven years ago. Janette, one of her daughters, is still clearly experiencing feelings of anger. She said:

"They still can't get over it, especially my eldest daughter, she's still angry".

It appeared that Amanda did not experience anger when she experienced her other losses. There was no anger towards her aunt's passing or towards her sister-in-law since she was sick. When her mother passed away she also did not experience any emotion of anger because in her opinion her mother missed her late father whom had passed away about five or six years prior to her mother's passing. She stated;

"My mother no, I wasn't angry, I was relieved for her because she was never the same after my father died... and more than once she told me she's missing him so much she wouldn't mind going to wherever he is".

Since Amanda's mother wished to be with her late husband, Amanda says that she did not really grieve for her mother, rather she only felt sadness. She said:

“So that's why I think really, I didn't really grieve because I knew she was where she wanted to be”.

The emotional response of *sadness* was experienced by Amanda during her many losses. Amanda did emphasize that sadness and *crying* were two different emotions and that one can be sad without having to cry. She said;

“Yes, sadness was there, sadness for me and crying are not the same. You don't have to cry to be sad. You can be sad without crying”.

Another emotion that came to the fore was that of *yearning*. Amanda yearned for her lost loved ones. When Amanda's son wed 11 months after her sister-in-law had passed away her brother-in-law arrived with a new woman and Amanda felt a longing for her sister-in-law and stated that she was “missing her”.

When Amanda was asked if she had completed her grieving for her mother she indicated that she still *missed* her mother, however it was only momentarily. She said:

“You know it... comes and goes. Sometimes I wouldn't think about it for a month..., or 2 weeks and then something will remind me of her and I will be sad and say “ah shame I miss her” or sometimes I hear her voice..., you know and her laugh or, or... and then I'll be sad but it will be just for a minute or two but not for a whole day or a few hours, just fleetingly”.

Amanda also reacted *physically* to each of her losses. A week after her mother passed away, she had absent-mindedly gone to the old age home on her way from work to visit her mother but then realized that her mother she had passed away. She recalled:

“No, it was about a week after she died I started you know. When I normally left the office I will just stop at the old age home every second day normally and I more than

once I found myself stopping in front of the old age home and then I... just no, but she is not here anymore, but like I said I can... I can deal with death”.

When her aunt passed away Amanda also found herself going to her aunt’s flat to visit her aunt but she had to remind herself that her aunt had too had passed on and stated that:

“Even now, I got to force myself not to go to her flat anymore”.

Amanda’s distress at not being involved with her aunt’s funeral accentuated her responses of her grieving. She admits:

“Yes, and that’s why it took me so long to get over that. More than once I dialled her phone number and when I heard the beep, beep, oh she’s not there anymore you know, so, yes I got quite upset”.

Amanda also had recurring dreams of her late husband and said;

“For about two or three weeks every night I had this same dream and I woke up and heard him speaking to me. I really heard his voice that’s why I woke up and... he was just here, he was right here in my dream, I heard him and... he was walking around and I was talking to him but he didn’t say a single word”.

When Amanda awoke after having these dreams, she said she always felt awful about the dreams. She recalled:

“ No, I felt terrible, uh, not just at those moments when I woke up, then I had those thoughts in my head and here he was and I sold everything, there’s nothing left of his cattle and I felt so bad for a day or two after that dream. Bit like I said I had it for quite a long time, a few weeks. I had the same dream most of the nights”.

When the dreams ceased altogether she said she was “not sorry”.

Pattern and duration of grief

The *pattern* and *duration* of Amanda's *grief* does not seem to follow a blueprint of any sort but rather it is varied. Emotions such as crying, sadness, anger and yearning occurred temporarily. She stated the following with regard to her emotions regarding her losses:

"No, they come and go. I'm not angry and sad all the time. No. I'll see something that reminds me of one of them and I will be sad you know but after a while it's gone, it's not all consuming anger or sadness or something".

Amanda alleged that she had accepted her losses and had dealt with them all. She said she was fine to talk about them, that is, about her late mother, aunt or husband. When she saw her sister-in-law recently she had this to say:

"I am over it, I'm not crying anymore and, you can talk about him (her husband) as long as you want to for the whole weekend if needs be and I'm fine, and I'm fine about my mother's death now and Rachael's. I'm, I'm... not getting upset".

With regards to the length of her grieving, Amanda said:

"Uh, it is difficult to say, I mean I can let go easily and say life's got to go on"

In her opinion there was no set way of grieving, and that grief was not universal. She did, however, believe that grief should be resolved as soon as one could. She said:

"Yes, that's what I said, everybody is different. There's no uh, uh set way of grieving in my mind. You know for some people for a week you've got a wake in your house or you know that type of thing. I don't know, it's not for me. It must be over as quickly as possible".

By Amanda's assertion, there were three phases of grieving, namely the actual death, the funeral and the time when one is left alone to process the loss. She explained these phases as:

"the funeral, except for the actual death of the person, the funeral is the second worst step of the way... and then I think the third step is when everybody is going back to

work, the children, whoever and everybody is not faffing around you anymore. When you know... now I'm alone and I got to go on by myself and that's the third".

Public display of grief vs. Private display of grief

One of the themes that seemed prominent was the private display of grief in contrast to the lack of public emotion shown during Amanda's various bereavements. The emotional response of crying was present during some of the losses that Amanda experienced. It seemed when Amanda was 23years old, she did show emotion publically at her brother's funeral. She explained:

"Like when my youngest brother died... he was 14. I was in hospital with my first born and my father just came and told me my brother died and the next... I was at his funeral. It took me a very very long time to get over my brother's death".

Amanda admitted that losing her brother had an enormous impact on her, especially since she also had no involvement with the funeral. She said:

"Yes, I'm the kind of person I must be involved in everything otherwise..."

It seemed that Amanda must be involved in "everything", since that is her approach to grieving for a deceased loved one. Therefore one of the reasons she publically displayed the emotion of crying at her brothers funeral was because she had not physically arranged her brother's funeral, and the emotion thus served as an outlet for her grief.

After her initial shock to her brother's death, Amanda's reaction was to grieve. She recalled the incident:

"But my brother dying was one of the worst moments because like I said I can still remember my father and his words and everything. I couldn't stop crying and normally I am that kind of person that if somebody cries in front of me, I cry with them".

It seemed evident that the shock of her brother's death therefore had a huge effect on Amanda when she was a young adult. She again reiterated;

“Like I can remember the day my father, uh, told me about my brother's death, I can still see his face... that horrible, horrible look on his face. So, I think that was one of the worst moments of my whole life was when I was told”.

Years later when Amanda lost her husband, she was determined to hide her emotions from her family and the public. She said:

“When Norman died... I knew if I started crying now I wouldn't stop and I think that's where everything started with me not crying. I willed myself because I knew if I started crying... it would be a disaster”.

When she was confronted as to why it would be a disaster she said:

“I wouldn't be able to stop... crying”.

Since she appeared to feel it would be catastrophic if she could not control her crying, Amanda thus made a decision not to display any strong emotions. Amanda did not cry publically at the death of her husband or at his funeral. She said;

“Well, I just decided I wouldn't cry”.

When her husband passed away, Amanda deliberately asked the doctor to give her “something” the night he died because she was anxious about displaying any kind of emotion. She states that it was for the benefit of her in-laws and her children, but essentially it was because she did not want to be out of control, especially at the funeral. She said:

“And that night it was it was about 9 o'clock that night, um, the doctor and the minister was here and I told the doctor to give me something... so I don't feel anything because I had to be there for my children and my in laws and so on... I, I didn't cry at the funeral, I didn't cry at anyone's funeral”.

Amanda did admit that that crying is permitted and even expected at funerals but she herself had made a decision that she would not cry at any funeral. When Amanda felt her emotions coming to the fore and felt she would likely cry, she made every effort to control her emotions. She said:

“Yes, I didn’t want to, because if I started crying my children would have been devastated. I told myself not to cry because if I cry I can’t be there for the other people... that are crying”.

Amanda preferred to contain herself and to be in complete control of her emotions. The public display of her true emotions at her brother’s funeral had exposed too much of herself to the public and thus a decision was made that she would not publically show emotion again, especially crying at a funeral again.

Although Amanda did not cry publically at the death of her husband, she stated that she had grieved her husband when she was alone since she believed grief to be a private affair. She recalled:

“But only if nobody could see me. I wouldn’t cry when my children or if any one of the family it’s... it’s private. I am grieving by myself. Yes, it’s private. I didn’t want to see everybody seeing me crying... or nothing. It’s, it’s my business.

Amanda strongly believed that grief and the emotions displayed in mourning was an inherently private affair, and therefore she did not wish to show her emotions publically during her bereavement.

As Amanda tells her story of death and grief and the emotions thereof, she often paused and hesitated before the mention of a certain emotion or mourning experience. The hesitation, recurrent terms and phrases indicated that Amanda had experienced more emotional turmoil than she stated during the interview, and that she may still have unresolved emotions to process.

Determinants of Bereavement

It was established that the nature of the relationship with the deceased, *personality variables* and the *historical antecedent* played a role in Amanda's bereavement. Relationships and personality variables were thus added as subthemes.

Relationships

According to Amanda, the *nature and security of the relationship* with the deceased did make an impact on her bereavement. Losing her husband and her brother who were both important to her was "one of the worst things that had happened" in her life.

Since she had had a close relationship with her mother and her aunt she grieved them more than she did her late sister-in-law and mother-in-law. It indicates that the relationship she had with each of the individuals may determine the nature and intensity of her bereavement. Amanda added that if she lost a child it would be dreadful for her, and she said:

"I think that the only thing that will still be very very, very bad for me is if one of my children...uh died. I think I don't know if I'll be able to cope with that. But it remains to be seen if it happens, but there can't be anything worse than a child dying".

Personality variables

Amanda's father passed away about five or six years before her mother passed away. In those years her mother had not gotten over her loss. Amanda indicated that the length of a marriage and the age of the surviving partner were significant factors in one's bereavement. She said:

"Yes, I think with age... the older you are, the longer you have been married..., I think it's worse.... They had been married, let me see... for between fifty or fifty five years and she couldn't get over it" Yes, how long and your age as well. I think it is quite important"

Amanda was in her early fifties when her husband passed away, and she believes that because of her age and because she was comfortable well off financially and could thus "go on living". Amanda alleged that if the security of her marital relationship been severed when she was younger, it would have had a different impact on her. She said:

“Well, I suppose so because then my children would have been still in the house and dependent on me or us. So I presume it would have been quite a lot more difficult”.

When it came to *gender*, Amanda admitted that her brother was “worse” than her in regards to showing his emotions. She said “he’ll show no emotion whatsoever”, and she agreed that women were more emotional than men especially during the time of an individual’s bereavement. She said the following about her brother:

“No, you can’t really you can’t really get close to him. He’s bottling everything up. Uh, well this is confidential so... um I’m sorry for my sister-in-law, Clara, because she’s the one who has to handle all the emotional stuff. He... he doesn’t want to be involved in any emotional stuff. He’ll do the financial side of stuff, the moment it gets the emotional things it’s no, so I’m feeling for him”.

It seems that her brother busied himself with the legal matters of the death of his mother such as the Will and so forth. He did not really share his feelings about the loss of his mother with Amanda or anyone else. She said:

“No, I’ll tell him just like I’m missing this and this and he says “Yes he will”, but that’s it. He wouldn’t tell me how he’s feeling and anything. He will do the, you know he will do the stuff, the Will like that type of thing. The moment emotion’s comes into play, no..., but that’s his way of dealing with stuff, so”.

When her mother was dying in hospital her brother delayed seeing his mother, and when he finally did go to see her it was too late. It was determined that he had grieved for his mother, but Amanda insisted that he did not cry. She said:

“In his own way but he won’t talk about it. No, no, no, definitely not. And I think it’s eating at him, but he wouldn’t admit it. I know him. I know him too well... but that’s his way of coping”.

Amanda said that she was a “strong person”. She had over the period of her life experienced many losses and had survived them quite well. It would seem that Amanda’s *disposition* and

realistic outlook on life has certainly provided her with the ability to handle the loss of a loved one.

Amanda declared that it was difficult “to deal with so many deaths” but added that she had gotten used to being exposed to so many deaths. She said:

“That’s why I said I think I’m immune by this time”.

It would appear that although Amanda had experienced many losses, it has not made her less vulnerable to the multiple losses she experienced in the past year. Amanda admitted that it was “difficult for her to deal” with so many deaths, and although she seemed to have her resolved her grief. Amanda had told herself “not to grieve” and “willed herself not to grieve” because that was her “way of dealing with death”, especially that of her late husband. Amanda maintained that she had, grieved her loved ones. Although she had grieved all her losses some were more intense than others.

Support vs. No Support

The sub themes *independency*, *dependency* and *control* are included under the above theme, since they are intertwined together with the themes of *dependency* and *independency*.

Dependency

It appeared that Amanda was quite available when others needed her or depended upon her for her assistance or support while grieving for the losses that she and her family encountered. When it became evident that her mother would die, the doctor had asked her to convince her family that her mother was dying. She mentioned that she put her feelings aside for her brother, sister and her in-laws too and said:

“I had to be there for them and try to convince them because the doctor told me ‘You must convince your brother and sister, she is not going to make it’”.

The night that Amanda’s mother passed away, the nursing staff of the hospital in the city phoned Amanda and advised her that the family should come to the hospital immediately

since the end was coming soon for her mother. Amanda recalled that night she drove her sister back to the hospital 100 km away:

“So in a way when they phoned me uh, the Monday night after my sister and me, we were there till about eight / nine that night, and about an hour after we arrived here, the sister phoned me and said “You better come uh... the end is near” and before we got in the car they phoned again and said she had died, but I still took my sister to the hospital because she wanted to see for herself she’s not there anymore”.

Amanda did not put herself and her needs first, but rather, she unselfishly thought of her loved ones’ needs. She therefore drove her sister back to the hospital. On another occasion she said:

“It’s my nature. Normally I don’t think about myself. I’m not important to myself”

The age gap between Amanda and her sister is six years. Amanda missed being close to her sister before her mother passed on. Even though her sister lives in another country, Amanda seemed to feel as though they have grown closer since her mother has passed on, and that her sister was more dependent on her now. She described their relationship now as:

“In a way, I’m looking out for her now, I feel we are closer. I’m the one she is phoning now if something happening in her life where she used to phone my mother and my mother would tell me about it. She is phoning *me* now instead of my mother or aunty Rachel. So I have sort of replaced them”.

Amanda’s mother had also been dependent on Amanda long before she passed away. She described her mother as naïve, and said that her grandfather and her father were very protective over her mother, which was the reason why her mother was not an independent person.

It seemed that Amanda always took her mother to the graveyard to clean the grave and to put flowers on her late father’s grave. Amanda and her mother had a ritual where she would accompany her mother to the grave for about five years; a ritual that the other family members did not share. She recalled:

“Yes, I used to take my mother once a month to my father and brother’s grave but there’s nobody because my brother wouldn’t go, my sister wouldn’t go”.

Independency

It was clear that Amanda had always been an independent person, who relied very little on others, even her late husband. Amanda recalled the following:

“You know because we always did our own ‘stuff’. He went hunting and blah, blah, blah. I didn’t like hunting and I went back packing and ... so on. I wasn’t solely dependent on him doing stuff for me. I think he would have been more lost than me if I’d died first. So I mean life goes on.”

Although Amanda is supportive and helpful in so many ways, she does not really acknowledge the bereavement of others. The underlying tone of some of her statements seems to imply that she may not be as patient with other people who are grieving and it may be possible that she does not recognize the mourning practices that may be different to her practices. When Amanda’s mother lost her husband and was grieving his death, Amanda seemed impatient with her. She said:

“That’s why sometimes I got angry with my mother because she could have been so pathetic...and I can’t stand that”

It also seemed distasteful to Amanda if one was dolorous while mourning loved one. She believed that one should accept the loss and move on with one’s life. She said:

“It’s no use sitting in a corner, it’s over. You can’t bring the person back so you just got to look forward”.

Amanda affirming that she was a sensitive person who did regard other people’s feelings was therefore a contradiction. Amanda said:

“Yes I am, I can immediately come into a room, I will feel the vibes. No, I am quite sensitive about other people’s feelings”.

Control

It was established in Amanda’s story that she took control of her emotions, especially when she willed herself not to cry. Amanda also took control arranging the many funerals she has attended. She said:

“I phoned most of the people myself and if somebody phoned me I spoke to everyone I didn’t anyone no, I can’t speak to them, I spoke to everybody that phoned and I also phoned most of the people... to tell them about it”.

Amanda has been supportive of those around her but felt that whether one received support or not depended upon how strong the person was. Amanda felt she was able to deal with her multiple losses because she was strong and thus had the strength to deal with them. She declared;

“I think I am a strong person because you know when my mother died my mother-in-law died two days before my mother and my sister-in-law died a day before my mother, so we had three deaths in about three days time”

Regarding support and being dependent on others, Amanda made it quite clear she did not really need other people to rally around her. She said:

“I think it depends on your character and your inner strength. I am not a person that’s dependent on other people. I can do stuff for myself. I can decide for myself. I just told them I am fine, they don’t have... they don’t have to worry about me. Even now I am telling them they mustn’t worry about me. Yes, look, I know my children are there, I know I got friends, I know I got family, that if I need them they will be there. And I’ll probably ask if I really need it. I think I will.”

Inner strength was a characteristic trait that Amanda deemed to be important in order to endure the loss of a loved one. Because she believed she had inner strength and was

independent. Amanda therefore did not ask for support, and admitted that she had never asked her family or her friends for assistance in any way during her time of bereavement.

It appeared that Clara, her sister-in-law, and her friend who had recently lost both of her own parents, Lilly, were a pillar of strength for her during her bereavement in the past year. She said:

“Yes, like I mean me and Clara, we are talking all the way and Lilly is there. And Lilly is my friend, and she went through basically the same thing I went through. Her father died of cancer a year, and her mother died a few months ago, more or less a year ago... so we understand each other and she used to phone me once a week ... and I did the same for her and so on. ...because we understand each other, we just have to look at each other to know we know we need support or whatever. So I think Lilly was a big influence in my life”.

Amanda needed support, and did in fact depend upon her friend and family and friends for support, which indicates a sense of vulnerability. Thus the temptation to assume that perhaps Amanda was cold-hearted regarding death can be negated.

Amanda came across as a very strong person emotionally. She is a “hands on” person and it seemed that she could be relied and depended upon to play the supportive role. Amanda also knew how to take control of various situations which was clearly evident when funeral arrangements needed to be executed.

Socio-political Context

Whilst discussing visiting the grave and keeping it clean the apprehension of going to the graveyard on her own seemed a concern for Amanda. Amanda had not returned to the grave of her mother since her mother’s funeral and said she would probably take Clara her sister-in-law with her when she did eventually go there. She did laugh nervously when she was asked why Clara, had to go with her. She said:

“Yes..., (laughs) I don’t want to go alone”.

It seemed that it was not safe to go to the graveyard alone. When her mother was still alive, she didn't let her mother go alone either. She said:

“Yes, that's the thing. That's why I took my mother I didn't want her to go there by herself and normally I took my pistol. And while she was busy there I'll just check if someone's not creeping up on us so, but you never know”.

Amanda proceeded to relate a story of a young man living in her hometown who had petrol thrown over him and was then set alight, because one of his employees had an axe to grind with his boss and took 'revenge'. The young man was in hospital at the time with 95 % burns. He subsequently died a few weeks later. Amanda was horrified at the way someone could take revenge in that manner. She related how “angry” she would be if that happened to her or if something terrible happened to her children. She said:

“I think I would be angry all the time. If one of my children is high jacked or... I mean what kind of person does something like that... I would never be able to do stuff like that even if I hated that person like... I wouldn't believe... I still wouldn't be able to do something like that. You can't do something like that. You can't be human doing stuff like that”.

The lack of safety in the country did not have an effect on the way Amanda grieved her many losses. However, it did have an impact on her lifestyle since she was forced to take her late mother to the graveyard to visit her father's and her brother's graves. She stressed how frightened she was, having to go to the graveyard fearing for her and her mother's life. She said:

“It's terrible not going to um the grave on your own because you will be robbed or killed or whatever. It's terrible... and they steal the flowers from the grave. It's horrible”.

Amanda's mother had been sheltered by her own father, and after her marriage she had also been shielded and protected by her late husband. Amanda thought that her mother “wasn't clued up on reality” and that for that reason too it was not safe for her mother to go to the graveyard. However “six to eight years ago”, Amanda had allowed her mother to go on her

own to the graveyard before the crime in South Africa became an encumbrance. Amanda said:

“Yes, she still preferred someone to go with but I... while she was still fine on her own and before the muggings I told her she could go by herself as long as she could but when the muggings and robberies started in the graveyard we told her no she can't go because she would be like in a daze and she wouldn't see anybody approaching her”

Amanda admitted there had been a time when it was safe to go to the graveyard but that it was not safe now. The phrases ‘it's terrible’, ‘it's horrible’ and ‘I took my pistol’ speak of the socio political environment she now lives in. The terms ‘muggings’, ‘robberies’, ‘killings and ‘steal’ emphasize what an unsecure dangerous situation Amanda had to must contend with regarding taking care of her loved ones graves.

The criminal situation in the country seemed to be an added burden for her. The terms ‘revenge’ and ‘hijacking’ also revealed what the current situation is like at present in South Africa. These ‘terms’ also expressed the perilous predicament that Amanda and her family were exposed too. The perilous predicament could however cost them their lives or the lives of their loved ones and could therefore redouble her grief.

Conclusion

Although grief has been an unwelcome intruder in Amanda's life, it certainly has not been a stranger. Amanda has indeed experienced many losses, most notably the multiple losses she experienced within the past year. Her realistic perception of death and of the deceased, as well as her personal beliefs regarding death has indeed assisted her during times of loss and sorrow. Her religious ideology of Christianity and her strong disposition have also contributed to her casual attitude towards loss and the response thereof. To be involved in the funeral procedures seemed an important asset in Amanda's grieving. Grief to Amanda seemed to be a private event, and one that Amanda apparently dealt with as quickly as possible. Amanda had told herself “not to grieve” and “willed herself not to grieve” because that was her “way of dealing with death” especially that of her late husband. Despite this, Amanda maintained that she had grieved her loved ones. Throughout her story there were

many contradictions and uncertainties regarding her mourning process. Various rituals and ceremonies were conducted according to Amanda's choices and the deceased's wishes and not according to any cultural norms. Amanda was very supportive to others but because of her inner strength she seemed to feel as though she did not need much support from other people. The socio-political situation in the country did not have a direct bearing on Amanda's multiple bereavements, but it did have an effect on her family's grief and her duties towards her loved ones and the upkeep of the graves.

CHAPTER 6

SARAH'S NARRATIVE: INDOCTRINATED GRIEF

Personal Data

Participant:	Sarah.
Ancestry:	Indian from Indian descent
Race:	Indian Muslim South African woman
Age	41
Occupation:	Nursery school teacher
Research Setting:	Interviews conducted from Sarah's home

Introduction

In chapter 6, a transcribed conversation between the participant and the researcher is analyzed. Prominent themes that emerged from the narration are highlighted. Since the major themes highlighted interweave with other themes highlighted they may seem to overlap with each other. The researcher acknowledges that the themes highlighted are those that she has identified through the lens of her knowledge of death and bereavement. It is essential to emphasize that the following themes do not represent a distinct or singular truth concerning bereaved people. Fundamentally, there are many truths out there and another researcher's analysis may feature other themes not represented in the present study. The original transcribed inquiry is available on request.

Sarah's Narrative

Sarah and her husband had made a decision to care for his parents in her husband's home since both his parents were aged and required assistance. Sarah, her husband, his parents, and various other family members took a trip to Mecca for a pilgrimage, an important Muslim ritual. However, whilst they were in Mecca, Sarah's father-in-law had to be hospitalized. The entire family had to return back home, apart from her husband, who remained behind with his father. The trip had proved too much for Sarah's father-in-law, who subsequently passed away in India. Shortly thereafter Sarah's mother-in-law passed away too.

The following themes were prominent in Sarah's story of death and bereavement:

Death perception and belief system

Sarah's *views regarding death* seemed to be culturally and religiously embedded. Since her *faith* as a Muslim is staunch, she strictly believed in the afterlife. Muslims refer to the afterlife as the hereafter or *Aalamè burzakh*. Sarah believed too that she would reap the benefits of what she sowed in this life time, and thus displayed no fear of death. She stated:

“I'm not scared of death, because you see as a Muslim we believe that there is life after death. And we *are* created for the hereafter and the hereafter, this world is a field, you know you get an empty land, whatever you cultivate in there that's what you're going to reap”.

Since Sarah exercised a dogmatic *belief* as a Muslim and believed she was “created” for another life, she did not fear death and she was therefore looking forward to meeting her creator. She said:

“So that is how, that is our belief as Muslims and I strongly believe in all of that..., and my faith in all that is quite strong in the sense that um you know we try hard in this world to achieve our here after, you know... that's why I ... am not scared of death and for me, death means meeting my creator so it brings happiness and joy in my life”.

Exploring the concept of death seemed to be a natural and acceptable act for Sarah, especially if one was very ill. However, according to Sarah, from a Muslim's point of view, it is considered disgraceful to question one's creator why one had to die, since it was her creator's prerogative to take a life at any given time. This was therefore something she emphatically would never attempt. She said:

“You don't talk out of turn. Because every one of us has to die, we cannot question our creator why did you take my husband or why did you take my parents, we all love our parents, but we all have to die one day. And if I look at my mother in law and father in law... I think if they had to live on they would have really suffered. They were sick they were old and they had lived a good life”.

Thus, according to Sarah, if a person was ailing or suffering and/or if a person had lived a fulfilling life then it seem quite acceptable and even justifiable if that person had passed away.

Sarah stated that she truly believed in Allah, and trusted him completely with an unwavering faith. She also seemed to have professed her faith in her actions and her words and thereby seemed to 'walk the talk', and to put into practice her stated beliefs. By putting her faith in her particular belief system, she therefore believed that she had no reason to fear death or the grave. She said:

“If I didn't have, like in Islamic we have *imaan*, is your strong belief in your heart. Like, *imaan* is if you believe in Allah with your tongue and in my heart. If our, if my *imaan* is weak then I will fear death, I will fear life in the grave”.

Initially, it seemed that Sarah certainly did not have a fear of dying however she seemed to contradict herself when she acknowledged that she did indeed find it hard to accept the fact that she will too die one day. This contradiction therefore seems to display a denial of her true feelings regarding death. She said:

“It's difficult to accept death... you know it's difficult to think you know what I'm also going to die, that's why we are encouraged to not accumulate too much of the

worldly things, because you are going to leave it behind, it doesn't make sense accumulating and accumulating, and you are going to leave it behind. So spend it on yourself, spend it in the way of Allah where you can gain reward, you know, go for pilgrimage, spend your money in doing good things, helping people, you know. So you know that what you're working for, what you earning is going to be of benefit for you for the year after".

While Sarah did indeed acknowledge that death was inevitable, it seemed that she took consolation in her faithful belief system. That is, that she would, under certain conditions, be rewarded in the life hereafter. Some conditions for her to receive her rewards were not to accumulate material wealth, to do good for Allah and to do "good" for her fellowmen. Therefore, to spend money on the needy and the self or on pilgrimages was justified, since it was for the good of Allah and not herself.

Sarah did not anticipate living to an old age. She stated laughingly that she would prefer to die young. She said:

"I'm not, I'm not looking forward to being old, I want to die when I'm young".

It seems that perhaps caring for her parents-in-law may have exposed her to the reality of what it is like to get old. Sarah therefore seems to have equated old age with suffering, sickness and dependency, since these were the aspects of old age her parents-in-law depicted whilst she cared for them. To jest about dying young further emphasizes the nervousness Sarah may have about the suffering that comes with old age.

Not only did Sarah's strong religious cultural viewpoints contribute to her obedient unquestioning of the loss of a life, but it seemed that her very stringent viewpoint contributed to her understanding of death. She said:

"And I think that uh your faith in Allah and your understanding that death is a reality and each every person has to die and we as Muslims believe that after death there is life after death and all the souls meet at a place called Aalamè burzakh, the world of souls. That's what we believe in strongly... and that is why I am not scared to die, you know."

The concept of the afterlife is very real for a Muslim Indian and especially for Sarah. She constantly believed that there is a place specifically for the souls who had passed on to the spiritual world. She said:

“Aalamè burzakh, yes, that is a world of... of dead souls you know who were in the world, after they die they all gather there and all the people... all the bad people meet there and all the family and everybody there and... that’s why you can send greetings to all the deceased relatives and everybody that has passed on”.

It seemed that all the dead souls, whether they were good or bad during life, met at “the world of the dead” and it was considered to be a festive, jolly and happy occasion. Sarah’s belief of the afterlife which is strictly based on her faith in Allah therefore seems to have impacted her in an extremely positive manner. She stated:

“All the souls of the dead gather at a place called Aalamè burzakh, the world of dead souls, you know. Not of new souls that are born, souls of people who have lived in the world and are waiting now for the hereafter. That is how we all meet all our relatives when we go there. Yes, actually you get to meet everyone you know so how could you be sad. Besides meeting the people, you get to meet your creator you know, you look forward to that. That brings joy and happiness in your heart”.

Despite the apprehension Sarah seemed to have about dying, she nonetheless seemed to be encouraged and feeling optimistic about entering the jubilant world of the afterlife. It seemed Sarah had therefore convinced herself that departing from this world carried its own benefits. These benefits were the jubilation of being reuniting with all her deceased relatives and creator.

Sarah did *believe in the spirit* world, however, she did not believe that one could have contact with the spirits of the deceased in the spirit world. Sarah said;

“No, we don’t believe in the spirit and all those things and that they come and visit and all that nonsense”.

Believing in spirits and speaking to spirits was therefore regarded as taboo according to Sarah. It seemed though that what Sarah and those who shared her faith believed was that the only actual contact the living could have with the deceased would be when the world came to an end and the Day of Judgment will take place and all people would then meet in paradise. She said:

“And uh, we know that when the whole world would come to an end and then that what we call Quiyamah and then after that again the angel will blow the trumpet and everyone will rise up and we all stand up in front of Allah and that’s when Allah will question everyone and according to how we performed in the world if we were good we will enter into paradise”.

It seemed that not all people entered into paradise or would enter into paradise when the world ended. The entering of paradise would occur after the souls had been at Aalamè burzakh. According to Sarah, redemption would be necessary for those who were regarded as bad the Day of Judgment and they would therefore go to “hell” in order to be purified before they could enter into paradise. She stated:

“And if you were bad you would go into hell to get cleansed from our sins and then enter into paradise”

Thus it seemed clear that Sarah believed in the Judgment Day, and that judgment would take place when the world came to an end. Sarah also believed that life here on earth was only temporary, and it therefore seemed imperative that one was to do all the good one can since one would harvest the benefits in the next life (paradise). If one did not do any good one would be punished in the grave. She alleged:

“Yes, that’s what we believe strongly Judgment Day. And we believe the life in the grave is true ...punishment in the grave is true, you know, and that like the life in the grave is a passing phase to the year after, that’s what I explained to you in the beginning. That is why I said you know we believe the world is a place where we are reaping our, uh planting our seeds and reaping our rewards. You will reap what you sow”.

The manifestation of Sarah's Islamic belief system is clearly apparent in her perceptions of life and death and in her typical cultural lifestyle. It is therefore important for her to consider that what she would sow in the world of the living would indeed distinguish what she would reap as her rewards in the life thereafter.

Sarah's belief in her religion has also defined her *perception of the dead person*. She indicated that after the dead were buried, the living prayed for the deceased whilst the deceased were in the grave. It seemed that from Sarah's cultural point of view, the people in the world of the living were able to pray and send rewards and gifts to the deceased who were in the grave. The act was explained as such;

“You see every day you pray, you send the rewards for them and they receive the rewards and it helps them in the grave. For example, I read a chapter in the Quran, I make an intention that this reward must be given to all the deceased in my family or to all the deceased in the graveyard or all the deceased that are here in South Africa then they will receive those gifts”.

Sarah therefore believed that the objective of sending rewards to the deceased was for the deceased's benefit. She also loyally believed the concept of rewards since it had apparently been proven by a 'prophet'. She said:

“It is a reality and it has been proven by the prophet – that there *is* such a thing. You know, he gave examples and people have experienced it. One person had a dream, a very pious man had a dream that he was, he dreamed the people of that graveyard were rushing they were all rushing to this one place and they were collecting things and bringing back. Only this one person wasn't collecting and he went to ask this person “how come you are not collecting and everybody else is collecting”? He said “No because I don't have anybody to pray for me, they all have their family that's praying for them and I don't have anyone” so this person started praying for this person and um ..., Next, and again he dreamed and this person was also rushing to collect his share and then when he asked him he said, “No now I am also receiving my gifts”. That means I am also going to receive my gifts.”

Since Sarah wholeheartedly believed that the deceased can indeed receive rewards, she thus believed that she too was going to receive gifts when she had departed from this world. It seemed that since a pious man had had these dreams of the deceased people in the grave, it was believed that it must therefore be factual. The “dreams” the prophet had implied that the deceased receive the rewards that have been sent to them by their loved ones, as well as that the deceased do have some sort of social life in the grave. She described another “dream” the pious man had had and said;

“So that’s like a proof and another proof he gave, in this one graveyard this person, this one particular person, every time they communicate he was in a very good condition and very happy, and he keeps receiving gifts, but he asks him....., he say “No, in a particular place, in uh this particular town you’ll go there, there’s a particular person selling you know, and that’s my son, and he memorized the entire Quran and reads them for me”. And this person went and he went to this particular town and he went to look for this particular person and he sees this person is standing but his mouth is moving all the time and he asks him “what are you saying”? He say “No my father is deceased and I read the Quran the entire day and at the end of the day I make this intention that my father must receive the rewards for whatever I’m reading so that is how I uh send rewards to my father who that is deceased. So this person said “Ok, that’s proof his dream was true” ”.

It seemed that Sarah needed to convince one of the rewards and gifts, and reiterated her belief in the rewards and gifts that the deceased apparently receive. She described another dream the prophet had apparently dreamt:

“And then uh after a while, he dreamed this person was now also you know wasn’t collecting anything and he was like rushing around with the other people and looking for things in the graveyard, he asked him “Like what, how come you not sitting satisfied and happy and you also rushing around with the other people,” and he said “I’m not receiving anything anymore”. So he went to look for this boy and he found his boy’s father had also passed away and nobody was sending him any rewards. So uh that’s proof that the rewards the deceased have received are from the people who are living”.

According to Sarah, it appeared that *the body of the deceased was regarded as sacred*. Since the body of the deceased was regarded as *sacred* in the Islamic faith, cremation is not an option; therefore Sarah only believed in burial. She said:

“No, it’s a burial. The reason why we don’t burn, as Muslims, is the body is regarded as something very, um, as sanctimonious,

It seemed too that the body of the living was also regarded as sacred. Sarah explained that it was a custom of her Muslim faith to observe and practice the sanctification of all bodily parts. Sarah indicated that it was very important for them to honour the sanctification of their body. She stated:

“We regard the body as something very... that is why even you know when um we uh, when we cut, shave our hair, or we clip our nails or any part of our bodies... We cut off... we have to bury it in the ground. You know we don’t uh throw it away. Even when we give birth, after birth, everything goes in under the ground. Because it is something regarded as something and that not anywhere... in a corner where nobody body walks. You must not trample on it. Bury it... not where people walk and trample on it and all of that. So, every part of a Muslim body is regarded as sanctimonious, it’s very important. That is why everything is buried”.

Sarah’s strong convictions concerning her culture and religion seemed to come to the fore throughout her story. However, her convictions seemed more prominent regarding her dedicated views on death, the afterlife and the rewards one will receive in the life thereafter and the perception of the dead body.

Religion

Although various aspects of Sarah’s religious beliefs and her faith have been noted under other headings, religion seemed to be a key factor in her bereavement and therefore it warrants a heading of its own.

Sarah’s parents-in-law were advanced in years, and her father in law was sickly. Family members were concerned about their welfare. Sarah’s husband, however, thought that a

pilgrimage to Mecca was important for his parents and therefore he planned the trip to Mecca. She described the trip as follows:

“And in that um, my husband suggested to my father-in-law that uh we would like to take him for pilgrimage to Mecca. So uh, much to the families ... you know everybody was against it and not happy about it because it was a long journey and they felt that they were old and they won't make the journey, that they won't uh be able to handle it. So, uh, but anyway with all that put aside, we still carried on with the journey. And it's exactly a year since we left we left; about the 11th June”.

It seemed therefore that in the Muslim faith, completing the pilgrimage to Mecca takes precedence over one's age, frailty and even one's state of health. Her father in law was literally on his deathbed, but he displayed excitement about completing the pilgrimage and thus the pilgrimage seemed his top priority. Sarah continued:

“We were preparing for the time to go. And um ... my father-in-law was actually very excited on the day that we left. He was very happy and he couldn't eat much but on that morning he ate two eggs, which he asked me happily to give him. He got up early had a bath, he was very anxious to go and he ate well at the airport and he loved Nando's and he asked for Nando's, he ate a whole quarter chicken; he felt happy. He likes the smell of the machine coffee he asked for that, he drank that. He took a walk, which he doesn't do he couldn't walk short...from here to the room and back. He walked quite a distance in the airport. He showed the entire family that he was happy to go. You know and that's how we went. It was 12 of us. And there my father was relatively well, he was fine, he used go to the Musjid, he used to prayer he used to go shopping with us. He went visiting with us a lot in Madinah. And on our journey to Mecca he got a bit ill but he still managed to do the pilgrimage that you do as soon as you enter Mecca.”

It seemed that once the pilgrimage was completed, Sarah's father-in-law took ill. Perhaps the trip and the pilgrimage may have been too taxing on him. It seemed, however, that the hype of performing this important religious ritual was a key motivation to remaining healthy and well. Sarah said:

“ And uh, we arrived on Mecca Monday night, Tuesday we did our pilgrimage, by the evening we were finished and on Thursday morning he took ill, very severely ill and Friday morning he was hospitalized and uh, spent twelve days in hospital in Mecca and our visa’s had expired and our accommodation was finished so we had to come home. So uh, we consulted with the uh you know the high priest, you know that were there and they all decided that we should all come back besides my husband, he stayed behind. My mother-in-law, everybody, we all had to come away and we felt that why my husband had to stay, if anything should happen to my father-in-law, he is a man he will be able to handle all the rituals and everything that is necessary to be done”.

Women, it seems do not participate in the rituals, ceremonies and burial procedures concerning the dead, and the decisions that are made concerning the dead are based on religious and culturally beliefs. Leaving her husband and father-in-law in Mecca was a tough decision for Sarah and her immediate family to make since they had no idea whether they would see her father-in-law again. She said:

“It was very difficult for us to leave him like that, you must know we didn’t know whether he is coming back home or not coming back home”.

However, for Sarah’s husband who remained behind in Mecca with his father, the time he spent in Mecca was a time he valued and savoured since he delighted in the time he spent with Allah and he seemed assured of Allah’s goodness to him. She stated:

“He said he felt very... um there was a lot, he was he, in fact for him it was more like a spiritual ah closeness to Allah. and uh he said the minute we left, it seems as though you know Allah was taking good care of him because people were coming to him, people were offering him food, people were offering him accommodation”.

When Sarah’s father-in-law was in hospital it seemed that her husband spent more of his time with Allah rather than with his dying father. It therefore seemed that to be in the presence of Allah was considered more important than spending one’s time with the dying. She said:

“And even uh, the day my father-in-law passed a way, he could see now, even the doctors told him there’s no hope now there’s only a matter of time, so he went straight

to the mosque in Mecca and sat in front of the Ka'aba and... he spent time like from two o'clock in the afternoon after visiting hours he only went back to the person's house at ten o'clock that night".

Sarah admitted that her husband was pleased to have had the opportunity to be with his father, but that to search his heart before Allah was what he really enjoyed. She said:

“Yes, and he liked to spend time soul searching”.

Religion seemed an important aspect of Sarah's life. Her faith, her strong religious convictions and religious beliefs came to the fore in virtually every aspect of her story told of her experience of death. It seemed an essential factor in her bereavement.

Mourning Procedures and Practices

With regards to death and bereavement *rituals* seem to be an important factor in Sarah's Muslim Islamic faith. Various rituals and ceremonies seemed to have been markedly entwined with many of the mourning procedures. The two subthemes *rituals* and *ceremonies* are included under the theme procedures and mourning practices since rituals and ceremonies were practiced during various procedures concerning the body of the deceased.

Sarah explained the *procedures* that her culturally religious family conducted for those who had passed away.

Rituals

First and foremost, the body of the deceased was bathed and enshrouded. She said:

“After they have passed away then they are bathed, the deceased is given a bath and they put on a shroud”.

Sarah declared that the bathing of the deceased was indeed a cleansing *ritual*. It was after the cleansing ritual that the body was then wrapped in a shroud and prepared for burial. She said:

“Yes, a cleansing bath. Then they put on three pieces of cloth for a man and five pieces of clothe for a woman”.

It was established that since a Muslim’s woman’s hair, together with her breasts, were regarded as private and personal, both these areas had to be covered with an extra piece of cloth when the body was enshrouded. The reason Sarah provided for this was:

“Because, the women have bosoms to cover and our hair, it is also regarded as you know, so we cover. That’s why we have two extra pieces. Only the women have extra, a chest wrap and a head covering. That’s how it makes it five.”

It seemed that there was no distinction made between the rich or poor in the Islamic community when a person died and therefore all people were considered equal. The shrouds that were used to cover the deceased’s body were therefore all alike. Sarah explained:

“And um everybody goes with the same cloth. No rich person goes with a different... and a pauper... everybody goes with um the same um pieces of cloth. But the entire big sheets are all the same. Same size, same kind, everything is the same”.

Despite the fact that some people are born into poverty or some into riches, it seemed apparent that when Muslim people, died they were all given the same treatment regarding burial. Sarah stated:

“When we are born, we are all naked and we die, we all go the same, that is the same in the cloth and into the grave... like uh before burial and after the bath, after the shrouding, we are brought now in front of a congregation of people...”

Ceremonies

Once the body was laid down for burial, it seemed that there were certain religious prayers that were recited by the Imam (religious priest) to the men congregated at the grave. These *ceremonial* prayers were regarded as the “last prayer”. Sarah said:

“The Imam that leads the Salaah in the Musjid, they lead the prayer in the Musjid, they lead the prayer for the deceased after that”.

During the *ceremony* of Sarah’s father-in-law in Mecca in the mosque when the Imam led the prayer for the deceased, her husband felt the need to include the family who were back home in South Africa in the ceremony and the prayer recitation. This seemed to have giving the family comfort and a sense of involvement. Sarah recalled:

“But what my husband did was very good he kept us permanently in touch step by step as to what he doing on the cell phone. He even put the phone on when the prayer for the deceased was taking place in the Harrenma, in the Masjid al- Harem in front of the Taba”.

According to Sarah, some of the Muslim rituals and ceremonies regarding the body of the deceased are conducted by both the men and women. There are, however, certain practices that are only performed by the males during the ceremonial burial. Before the burial, the women have the task of praying for the deceased. Sarah explained:

“No you see when a man passes away, the men bathe and shroud and the woman do for woman and bring the... we call it a mayjit, the dead body we bring that home and the ladies all sit around and we pray the Quran and we pray around the dead body, until it’s time for the men to come collect for burial and when the men come and collect for burial then they take to the graveyard and there is a place there at the graveyard where they pray, the congregation... And they bury the body and that is all for the men”.

The acts of praying to Allah from the Quran, for the deceased and about the deceased were constantly emphasized in Sarah’s story. Prayer is thus regarded as an important factor in the Muslim faith, not only because it was acts as a form of intercession for the deceased, but also because it produces rewards. She said:

“And the prayers and the sermon is made, the prayer is made and then after that the person is taken to the graveyard, where we are buried under the ground.”

Burial vs. Cremation

Sarah ascertained that Islamic Muslims were buried and not cremated since they believed that the body of the deceased was sanctified. According to Sarah, the body of the deceased is wrapped in a shroud and placed in the ground. Sarah said:

“And then we are buried and then at the graveyard also there are two different types of graves, one grave places the body into the ground with the uh with the uh, the place where you going to put the body with the planks over it”.

The deceased are not placed in a coffin, but are placed in the ground in graves that have been dug out in a specific way to allow for the planks to be placed at an angle over the body. The Islamic Muslim culture has its own specific procedures regarding the body. Sarah said:

“You don’t throw sand over the body. Or into, because sometimes the grave is going in like they cut the grave (she indicates the two different shapes with her hand). So many feet down but at an angle like that (She shows the specific angle with her hand) and the body laid facing Mecca, facing Mecca. The face faces Mecca and uh they put planks”.

Given that it was crucial that the body of the deceased face Mecca in the grave and that the burial had to comply with certain protocol, the burial therefore seemed to be a culturally - religious affair.

It was established that once the body had been laid, planks’ were fitted next to each other to cover the shrouded body. However, there is no special ritual concerning the laying of the planks. She said:

“Once the body’s been laid, they put planks and they fill the grave up with sand. It’s put on a special side so it fits properly next to each other. It just has to be done like that with your body and then you buried”.

For many people of other cultural backgrounds, tombstones are part and parcel of a burial, however, according to Sarah, in the Muslim culture tombstones are not erected in honour of the dead. She said:

“There is no uh putting on tombs or anything. What we do just to recognize which grave is... a particular persons grave, we just put a name plate.

It would seem therefore that there is no emphasis on one’s status since the deceased just receive a name plate. Although Sarah stated that the Muslim society does not place flowers at the grave, they were allowed to plant green plants at the grave. It seemed that the grave held a religious connotation since it was considered religiously appropriate to plant a creeper of some sort. She stated:

“You can put a green twig. It grows all over the grave and we believe that plants also pray, due to that it will lighten the punishment in the grave...”

It thus seemed that there was redemption for the deceased souls in the grave that were in need of purgatory. Deliverance and liberation into the hereafter was therefore possible, due to the belief that plants prayed on behalf of the deceased.

According to Sarah, Muslims however did not believe in placing fresh flowers at the grave, since the planting of creepers was the appropriate practice. She said:

“You can plant like a creeper or something over it, not like flowers you water once a week and things like that”.

Sarah mentioned that “pathways” were fashioned at the graveyard however these pathways would only be used during burial ceremonies since burial graveyards were deemed sacred. And people were not really allowed to walk in the pathways. She said:

“In the graveyard, they make pathways to walk between the graves, but you are not allowed to go down on one of them or put a tombstone”.

To visit the graveyard or to speak to the deceased at the graveyard seem to be practices that are not common to the Muslim culture. Sarah said:

“No, well as Muslims we don’t uh like pray to the grave, we don’t pray to the deceased. “No. We don’t have anything like that. No, there is no place for all of that in Islam. It’s finished (the burial) and then we pray for our deceased everyday not once a year”.

It was inferred that Muslims do not pray *to* the deceased but rather *for* the deceased. It seemed that once the burial was over there were no other ceremonies practiced. No emphasis was placed on the anniversaries of the death, or the deceased birthday date and or other dates. What did seem imperative was that the living and survivors religiously prayed *for* the deceased using verses from the Quran.

Public Display of Grief vs. Private Display of Grief

Sarah stated that from an Islamic faith point of view, women were not to publically display one’s emotions during grieving. Since it was not culturally-appropriate for women to display their emotions publically, it was therefore religiously and culturally acceptable that woman did not frequent the graveyard during the burial since they were soft natured and were quick to cry or wail. It seemed therefore that since men were able to contain their display of emotion, they were allowed to be part of the congregation and be at the burial. Sarah explained that;

“The men go... the women don’t, because why, the prophets often explain why the women are not supposed to go to the graveyard because women have a... women are very soft, we cry easily and wail”.

It was therefore established that the woman folk of the Islamic faith do not attend the ceremony or burial of their loved ones since there was the possibility that the women could “wail” or “cry”, whilst mourning and thereby create a spectacle at the ceremony during the burial. The Muslim faith therefore called for women to remain at home, where they would pray for the deceased until the men arrive back from the burial. Sarah stated:

“Pray, we pray here at home. We pray at home... till the men return”.

According to Sarah, women were allowed to display their emotions privately. She said:

“Yes you can, you can cry you can show any kind of sad emotions, bereavement or anything, there are no restrictions”.

It seemed therefore, that one is allowed to display emotions of grief and that grieving for a lost loved one was permitted. She said:

“And if you grieve also, you’re allowed to grieve, not that you can’t grieve, not that you have a hard heart”.

Although Sarah asserted that there were no restrictions to grieving a lost loved one, it seemed that when grieving for a lost loved one, the women did indeed need to be disciplined. It seemed that if the Muslim women showed self-control then according to the Islamic faith, Allah would grant these women rewards. Therefore, lamenting and wailing were suppressed since receiving rewards from Allah was of importance to the women and the bereaved. Sarah said:

“And then we start wailing, screaming, clapping our hands, things like that are not uh... advised in Islam. When we grieve we should uh have patience, because we believe the more patience you have the more rewards you get by Allah you know”.

Since the display of emotions, or crying and wailing, should be controlled or suppressed, it therefore seemed to place restrictions on the women’s emotional response to death. Sarah stated:

“You *don’t* scream, you know, or howl and wail”.

It seems that the private and the public display of emotions need to be religiously and culturally adhered to from an Islamic Muslim point of view. If the prescribed grieving specifications are not appropriately displayed, not only would Allah be offended but it seems that the Muslim community would frown upon any inappropriate behavioural responses.

Bereavement behaviour

Under the theme bereavement behaviour, the subthemes of the *emotional responses* to death and the *physical responses* of grief, as well as the *period* and *pattern* of grief are included. Society and culture have defined the situation in which the bereavement behaviour has been exhibited. This was evident in Sarah's story, where grieving was very much a cultural and religious affair.

It seemed that Sarah's husband did indeed grieve the loss of his father. It seemed too that he had developed a sound theology, which had become his pillar of strength during his time of sorrow. Sarah recalled:

“You know, so, and he had that time to... grieve on his own and... grieve in front of the Ka'bah and talk to Allah how he wanted to talk and that was his time you know with his creator.”

Emotional and physical responses to death

When Sarah's father-in-law passed away, her mother-in-law was frail and sickly. While she was mourning the loss of her husband in a calm manner, she also seems to have had a controlled and serene ability to encourage the family members to be positive in their time of sorrow. Sarah said:

“And uh it was a very uh difficult time you know especially we all thought we all expected my mother in law to be very, very upset, but she was more calm then all of us. She gave us courage”.

It seemed that Sarah's mother-in-law was a strong devout Islamic believer too and she seemed to have set an example to the family as to how one should react during times of sorrow. Sarah said:

“And she kept saying that now that my father in law is gone, us that are alive, we must remain together we must live with love and understanding and must stay a strong family”.

When Sarah was asked *her* reaction to the loss of her father-in-law, she proceeded to describe a *collective* reaction to the death of her father-in-law by describing how the family responded, and made heavy use of the word ‘we’ while sharing the story. She thereby portrayed her grief as a communal event rather than a personal, individual process. She said;

“Sad, yes, we were very, very sad and were upset. But what my husband did was very good he kept us permanently in touch step by step as to what he doing on the cell phone. He even put the phone on when the prayer for the deceased was taking place in the haram in the Masjid al-Haram in front of the Ka’bah.”

Sarah experienced various emotional responses in her time of bereavement and when her mother-in-law passed away she was indeed saddened. She stated:

“I was, I was very, very upset”.

However, the emotional responses that the bereaved Muslim experiences may be considered dutiful since it seems that these responses are prescribed and imposed by the community which adhere to the customs of the Islamic faith. She said:

“Yes, you cry softly. Only thing is you don’t scream, you don’t question, you don’t cry loud, you don’t shout”.

It is therefore clear that grief in the Islamic faith is contained and restricted by customs, and although one can express *sadness* and *cry*, the emotional reaction of crying seems to be suppressed to a certain extent. According to the Muslim faith one should not question the loss of a loved one and this seems to indicate a culturally and religiously closed and dutiful institution.

Emotional responses of *guilt* and *anger* seemed to be emotional responses that were not conducive during the mourning process since the experience of those emotions were not permitted by Allah. Sarah said:

“Some days, those are natural feelings that come in and some days when the wrong emotions come then you repent for it and correct yourself. You know, you try and put yourself in the correct perspective”.

The act of repentance therefore insinuates that a sin was committed. Therefore it seemed that if an Islamic Muslim displayed emotions of anger or guilt during their bereavement, they were indeed committing a sin and had to repent thereof.

It was established that when Sarah’s father-in-law had passed away, her mother-in-law had become *restless* and she *pined* for her deceased husband. Sarah said:

“But... I suppose you know if it was time for her to go, so she just went downhill every day. She had gone very very restless. Her body had gone cold and she was just pining for my father in law. They were very, very close”.

Eight days after Sarah’s father-in-law had passed away, her mother-in-law passed away too. However, it is not clear whether her frailty had caused her death or if her pining had contributed to her passing away. It seemed that although Sarah and her family had anticipated her passing, her death was still considered unexpected and a shock. She said:

“Very quick it was totally unexpected. Very unexpected, it was a shock”.

Not only did Sarah and her family experience sadness at the loss of the two elderly parents, but it seemed that the family were saddened too because the parents’ prayers for their children had ceased. It appeared that the prayers of the parents seemed to hold some sort of supremacy. Sarah said:

“And when they went also we felt like we were sad to lose parents because we as Muslims believe that once our parents are gone the door of praying for us is closed...”

because we believe that a parent's prayer is accepted very quickly. Yes, the parent's prayers are closed, so that's what makes us feel very sad".

According to Sarah, her husband found *comfort* by internalizing the Quran and spending time with Allah when his father died. She said:

"Uh I think that alone gave him a lot of consolation and my husband's faith in Allah is very, very strong."

According to Sarah, it seemed important for the loss of a loved one to be accepted as a natural act of Allah, and thus by dutifully accepting the loss there would not be any dire consequences. Sarah elaborated upon this by saying:

"If you accept it, you have more peace of mind in your heart and it's peaceful and if you don't accept it and you start questioning and you start, you know fighting with Allah, then obviously you are going to become a miserable person and at the end of the day you end up with depression. And then you suffer in the end, but if you accept it as the will of Allah, in fact the accepting good, bad, happy, sad emotions, that is part of a person's faith. It is part of our faith to believe and accept".

Depression is therefore considered to be the result of not accepting one's loss and this would not occur if one's faith in Allah was strong. It seemed clear again that grieving process itself was shaped by Sarah's beliefs and customs, and that it is a cultural and religious response to the loss of a loved one. It seemed too that death was the will of Allah, and if one displayed anything other than automated acceptance to the loss of a loved one, then one's faith was questionable. Sarah said:

"If your faith is weak, then you go in a depression, then you'll become like that upset you'll allow all your emotions to take over your body, your mind, you become sick, you become depressed".

Therefore during bereavement it seemed that to exhibit one's emotions publically was to put one at risk of developing depression, hence it was better if one accepted death unreservedly

and inhibit ones response to death. Sarah acknowledged that the act of continual grieving could come to resemble an illness. She said:

“Yes, if not handled correctly. If your faith is weak... it can become terrible”.

According to Sarah, it seemed that to *dream* of the lost loved one was not uncommon and that to dream of the deceased could suggest that the survivor must pray for the deceased. She said:

“You do dream of them, sometimes you dream of them in a good condition sometimes they are sad you know, and when we ask our priest and they will say that if we dream of the deceased it means they are asking us to pray for them”.

It seemed therefore that the bereaved did not dream of the deceased because the bereaved person longs for or misses the deceased, but rather because the deceased is in dire need of prayer and the dream serves as a vehicle to communicate this need. Sarah said:

“You’re not praying for them enough. They are asking you to pray for them that’s why you dream of them”.

Period and pattern of grief

It appears that the *period* for grieving is extremely specific and the time period allotted for grief is short. This makes the *pattern* or *phases* of grief appear to be quite vague. Sarah said;

“Say, for example, if my father, brother, sister or any member of my family besides my husband passes away, then I’m allowed to grieve for three days. After that, I must now try to continue with life as normal as possible”.

It may seem incomprehensible as to how one was to continue with ‘life as normal as possible’ after only three days of grieving, especially as one was not to “wail” or lament. However, since the period of grieving was a specific cultural and religious directive, it seemed that the bereaved was to honour the professed proclamation, regardless of how the bereaved was genuinely feeling.

Since this was a specified obligation to Sarah's culture and religious beliefs, it therefore highlighted why Sarah and her family would knowingly suppress many emotional responses and especially those of anger and guilt. It appeared that to show these emotions, may be construed as a woman disrespecting Allah. She said:

“That also like, sometimes women when their husband passes away, how dare they show their anger to Allah!? They just go berserk. So in their dressing they go down or in their ways.”

Sarah's implication that one does not question Allah or have the audacity to be angry with Allah thereby highlights her dogmatic doctrine. Sarah emphatically stated that a bereaved woman should at all times *submit* under the authority of her Creator, and must therefore unquestionably accept the loss of her husband.

Sarah indicated though that if a woman had lost her husband, she was however allowed to grieve for a period of 130 days. She explained:

“And uh if my husband passes away, then I have permission to grieve for four months and ten days. One hundred and thirty days. The reason why for that is bereavement for a woman for her husband is regarded as her last service to her husband. Because, in Islam we believe that uh a woman's service to her husband is a very great act of worship so that is why she regards looking after her husband as something very important in her life. So now, this sitting in bereavement she will sit in her house in the confines of her home, uh she won't go in front of strange men”.

Sarah's strong Islamic beliefs come to the fore again when describing the process of mourning a husband. It appeared that grieving for a husband was not an act of grieving for the loss, but rather it seemed an act of worship and service for a husband. When Islamic women 'worship' and serve their husbands, it reveals a godly adoration they have for their men. It therefore indicated the godly significance that Sarah and her specific culture placed on men.

According to Sarah, when woman were grieving for the loss of a husband they were expected to behave in a modest manner. The act of grieving of the bereaved Muslim, which is known

as *iddat*, has a ritual connotation. Sarah described the period of *iddat*, or the ‘waiting period’ as follows;

“You know she’ll wear simple clothes not like loud colours and prettifying herself and put on make – up and talking to them and everything. Because she is grieving, she is in bereavement. So that is your last service to your husband. To sit and do your um it’s called *iddat*, your waiting period *iddat*, I- d- d- a- t. If you do that correctly, then that is your greatest service you did for your husband. That is showing you are grieving. No fancy clothes and jewellery and you know makeup and perfume”.

It appeared therefore that mourning a husband for 130 days was a humble cultural rite. It is through this modest ritual that the bereaved honours her husband, and is set aside from others in the community. It seemed that when a woman lost her husband and if she then passed away during her *iddat* or waiting period she was therefore rewarded. Sarah said:

“There is an extra reward for you if die in your *iddat* like my mother in law passed away in her. So there is more reward for her because she died in her *iddat*”.

Sarah established that should a bereaved widow leave her home during her time of *iddat*, the public would recognize that she was grieving by her modest dress code. She said:

“They will see that you are all not made up”.

However, Sarah stated that a bereaved widow was actually not permitted to venture out of her home unless it was an emergency or if urgent business had to be conducted. She said:

“Even like, you are not allowed to go to the shops either. Somebody must do the shopping for you and the doctor, also the doctor must come to the home if he can come to the home otherwise if it’s absolutely necessary then you can go out. And maybe if you must sign legal documents and somebody else can’t do it for you then you must just go and come straight home. For the 130 days, yes the lawyer, doctor, bank you know things like that the legal stuff”.

Sarah stated that if a husband lost his wife, he was under the same directive that was applied to a woman who had lost a family member. That is, he grieves only three days for his deceased wife. She said:

“Three days. Yes, he is allowed to get married immediately after his wife dies. But a woman has to wait for her *iddat* to be over before she can get married again”.

It seemed the reasoning behind a man grieving lasting for only three days was because it was believed that a man was unable to take care of himself and would be in need of counselling, and therefore marriage after such a short period of grieving was justified. Sarah explained:

“Because a man is somebody who is not like a woman who can look after himself so well you know, and he needs comfort, he needs someone to show him kindness and things like that. That’s why a man can get married again [so soon]”.

Sarah confirmed that her and her husband had grieved for his late parents for the specified three days only. It is evident that Sarah had been instructed to control her sorrow and that her mourning has been a dutiful action that has been imposed upon her by her particular community.

Determinants of Bereavement

According to Sarah, the *nature* of the *relationship* and the *duration* of the relationship did not alter the bereavement period. If you were married 60 years or a couple of hours, it made no difference to the period of grieving. A period of mourning was prescribed and one had to adhere to those prescriptions. She said:

“even if you’re married 2 hours”.

However, in Sarah’s case, her parents-in-law had been married for 60 years, and reportedly enjoyed a close relationship:

“So close and especially the past two years before they passed away they were all the time together because my father-in-law sold his business, so they were permanently

together. The whole day together, eating together, resting together, talking, holding hands, hardly going anywhere because they were not well to travel. So they were all the time together”.

It seemed that although there was a specific time period to grieve, regardless of the nature and duration of the relationship, it did not serve to lessen the yearning and longing for the lost loved one.

Sarah lost her grandmother, to whom she was very close, 15 years ago. When she spoke about her loss she became quite emotional. She said this about her grandmother’s passing:

“No I still... me personally I was very, very close to my grandmother...And she has passed away now; it’s 15 years and I just feel it was only yesterday, the way I miss her. I miss her terrible, where she was my uh.... very close, we were very close friends, more than granny and grandchild. We would laugh together, we could talk about our sorrows our happiness, we could do anything together, we could bake, cook, laugh, play”

Sarah and her grandmother did seem to enjoy a very close relationship therefore it seemed that the nature of the relationship played a part with regards to the longing of the lost loved one. Perhaps in reality the emotion displayed in her aforementioned response may suggest that the ritual of forcibly terminating grief after three days, emotions that would have been expressed had instead been suppressed.

Sarah indicated that her relationship to her grandmother was important to her. She said:

“Yes, very. I miss her a lot”.

Her relationship with her grandmother was a close one, and she considered her to be more akin to a sister, mother and friend. She said she was:

“Everything (Laughs). My grandmother was very attached... I was very attached to my grandmother, my mother’s mother and even my nephew, my brother’s son; he passed away in an accident suddenly. He was the eldest grandchild, and we all doted on him

and loved him so much and he was very lovable himself. I also miss him a lot and think about him”.

Sarah had also lost her husband’s niece who was only 25 years old when she passed away. She still experiences the pain of this loss too and acknowledged that the nature their relationship had been close. She said:

“Like my husband’s niece, I also miss her a lot.., she was very attached to us. She passed away giving birth, while giving birth and she was very close to my husband and myself and her child is like that to us now. Even though we hardly see her she is very attached to us. She longs for us and we visit her and she carries on as if she sees us all the time yet we hardly see her you know. It’s because of the relationship we had with her mom”.

Sarah affirmed that the mode of death is also a determinant to bereavement. She said:

“It does. You fear its natural human feelings at the end of the day you know. If someone dies suddenly in an accident or they were killed or something like that, it’s actually difficult for you to accept. But your iman again comes in front, your belief, your faith. The stronger your faith, the easier it is for you to accept, but uh... it’s difficult to accept when somebody dies tragically or in a bad way or if they were murdered or if they passed away in a car accident. That makes it very hard”.

Sarah did, however, acknowledge that if someone was ill or suffering then it therefore was simpler to come to terms with their passing. She said:

“If somebody is sick that makes it easier to accept”

Sarah seemed to have had experienced quite a few deaths but it became clear that her Islamic faith and her particular beliefs that were embedded in her Muslim culture had to a large degree determined how she had grieved for all he losses.

Support vs. No support

The sub theme *dependency and dependency* is included under the major theme of support vs. no support.

Dependency and independency

It seemed that as a daughter-in-law, Sarah had only established a close relationship with her parents-in-law once they were in their golden years. At this point, they had apparently become increasingly *dependent* upon their children for all their basic needs. She said:

“Um, I’ll just go a little um into um the night before they my father in law and mother in law passed away because uh..., I feel it’s necessary for me to explain about that, to understand me uh as a daughter-in-law how I became to be so close to them”. I grew close to them in the last five months you know, since my father in law was in hospital and uh and they stayed here in my house and I did take care of them like two small children you know”.

Sarah’s father-in-law had been ill and both her aged parents-in-law had to be assisted in their day-to-day basic care. Therefore a decision was made that Sarah and her husband would become the caregivers and take care of her parents-in-law. She recalled:

“Um, so when my father-in-law got ill and was hospitalized and we realized my husband and I realized that uh they are old, they won’t be able to take care of themselves. Both my mother-in-law and my father-in-law are quite advanced in age and now they both needed, uh, assistance in everything, you know like we call old age a second childhood”. They needed help with everything in the bathroom and eating and everything. So we felt the best thing to do was to bring them home and take care of them now at the end because we did not know how long they going to last”.

Sarah did not have any children of her own however it seemed that caring for her aged in-law's evoked her natural nurturing instinct. She willingly cared for them and gave them the assistance and *support* they needed. She said:

“When the children leave at 5pm, I would immediately go into the room and put my father-in-law on the blood circulation machine for half an hour and then I used to massage my mother-in-law for half an hour and when that was finished I used to put her on the blood circulation machine, massage him, soak his feet you know... and rub him... and things like that. I used to like uh”

Sarah's willingness to care for and sustain her parents-in-law therefore implied that she had a sympathetic and caring nature.

Sarah made it clear that she had no regrets going the extra mile to take care of her parents-in-law. It seemed to have giving her much pleasure to care for and exhort them up. The closeness of the family was revealed when Sarah stated that an old age home is not the place for one's elderly parents to live. It therefore confirmed Sarah's willingness to open her heart, as well as her caring nature. Sarah said:

“I used to look after them, like I felt like they needed attention, they needed love and care, so whatever time I could give them I would give them and that is why I don't regret... I don't have any regrets. As a daughter-in-law I feel um, I did more than I should do., And it brought a lot of joy to my father-in-law and my mother-in-law..., to think like you know what, there is somebody who doing us nicely in our old age, because today people take their parents and put them in an old age home, they don't even know what difficulties they are going through, and they not sharing the parents in their trying times and I don't have any regrets that alone gives me satisfaction in my heart. You know what at the time when they needed me the most, I was there for them”.

After Sarah's father-in-law had passed away and her husband had arrived back from Mecca, she broke her leg. Despite her difficulty in getting around she none the less continued to care for her mother-in-law. She said:

“He came back... he arrived on the Saturday and I fell and I broke my leg... so I was in plaster, so my mother-in-law went into shock, she said ‘If your leg is broken, who is going to take care of me’, and I said ‘I’ll look after you even with my broken leg, you mustn’t worry’”.

Sarah’s in-laws were dependent on her, and although it seemed that she herself was very *independent*, throughout her story it was evident that all her decisions, her compassion and mercy was the result of her dependency on Allah and her husband. She stated:

“And I did it for the pleasure of Allah and also it made my husband happy.”

Sarah did not attribute her care-giver qualities to her own personality; rather Sarah believed that Allah had chosen her to care for her parents-in-law. It seemed that Sarah’s believed that this particular role was the result of her practiced faith that she was dependent on, and a deep-seated belief that she had been chosen to be the care giver. She said:

“But, I... I feel satisfied in the sense that I’m happy that Allah chose me to do it. Not everybody can do it... you know. At the end of the day I am also going to be old one day”.

When Sarah and her family had to leave her husband and his father in India, she was very concerned for her husband since they could not anticipate the future. She said:

“And also we didn’t know whether, how my husband is going to manage alone you know... to be there you don’t know what you are expecting. Anyway we left Sunday, we greeted my father in law and we left Sunday and we arrived in South Africa on Monday... and on, um, Tuesday night my father-in-law passed away in Mecca.”

However, whilst Sarah’s husband stayed in Mecca when his father was in hospital and he had no accommodation her trepidation was unwarranted. It seemed he was supported by complete strangers who showed him much kindness and generosity. It was again noted that caring and supporting others in need was a common trait amongst those of the Muslim faith and that a Muslim Islamic person could depend on Allah. She recalled:

“Allah was taking good care of him because people were coming to him, people were offering him food people were offering him accommodation. People were, uh, like coming towards him and assisting him, he didn’t have to go look for help anywhere that is how he felt, you know. One person, a complete stranger invited him to stay at his house, he took him ever time to the hospital he took him to the big Mosque in Mecca and uh he used to spend most of his time when he wasn’t visiting my father-in-law in the hospital he was sitting in the Mashada in Mecca, in front of the Taaba praying and making intentions for my father-in-law”.

Support, it seemed, was also unselfishly given to the bereaved during her time of bereavement (130 days of iddat). The family members and community hold up the bereaved during her time of mourning and help her bear the burden of her sorrow. Sarah explained:

“Somebody is with her... all the time, somebody tries to be with her all the time, and if they can’t then that’s one of those things but 99% of the time there is always somebody with her they coming to stay, family members will take turns to come and stay be with her you know they won’t leave her alone.”

It seemed that in the Muslim faith, it is imperative to be fully committed to Allah. Sarah explained that after the iddat is over for a bereaved woman, it was important that she continued to display a marked appearance of *control* and contain herself. Sarah said:

“She’s always more spiritually controlled, when after her waiting period is over, she’s also um not like gone haywire. She doesn’t go loose. Why? Because she submits herself to Allah and she realizes that you know what, my husband is gone and this is now my duty to my creator and this is what I should do and this is what I shouldn’t do, I must control myself and this is how I must conduct myself now that I am alone, you know, you don’t just go loose.”

It was evident that although Sarah was independent in nature she was also dependent upon her husband and her creator. It seemed therefore, in the Islamic Muslim community that a woman’s priority was submission to her husband, but more significantly, submission to Allah. This is especially true during her time of bereavement. The act of support seemed to be

a natural facet in the Muslim community, and was therefore available for and freely offered to the bereaved.

Conclusion

It seemed evident that tradition culture and religion indeed played a major role in the response to the losses Sarah experienced. Her faith and behavioural norms displayed during her bereavement were evidently defined by her cultural and religious beliefs and values. Her perception of death was evidently based on her staunch religious beliefs. Mourning and the practices thereof are not personal expressions rather they are culturally and dutifully performed practices. Sarah's viewpoint of loss and the response thereof has been defined and shaped by Sarah's cultural beliefs and customs. It is clear that her religious beliefs have also defined the situation in which Sarah is allowed to grieve. Grieving for Sarah and her community is strictly a controlled endeavour. Although one may be sad, to grieve past the three days given for mourning (except for the *iddat*) seems to be considered an injustice to Allah, and the veracity of one's faith is thus questioned.

If sorrow is not controlled or disciplined, it is believed that it can lead to depression. It appears that if the bereaved continues to display various emotional releases, the bereavement behaviour can be considered an illness.

According to Sarah, certain variables such as relationships and age can and do play a role in determining bereavement. Support for the bereaved seemed to be an important factor in the Muslim community especially support for the widow. Support in general also seemed to be a common factor amongst the Muslim people portraying them as a caring community/group of people.

CHAPTER 7

LILLIAN'S NARRATIVE: "LAW" ABIDING MOURNING

Personal Data

Participant:	Lillian
Ancestry:	Indigenous South African from Negroid descent
Race:	Indigenous Tswana South African
Age:	49
Occupation:	Housekeeper
Research Setting:	Workplace

Introduction

A transcribed conversation between the participant and the researcher is analyzed in Chapter 7. The grammar in the transcript is poor however to maintain the integrity of the participant's words the researcher has left the grammar and sentence construction unaltered. Prominent themes that emerged from the narration are highlighted. Since the major themes highlighted interweave with other themes highlighted they may seem to overlap with each other. The researcher acknowledges that the themes highlighted are those that she has identified through the lens of her own knowledge and experience of death and bereavement. It is essential to emphasize that the following themes do not represent a distinct or absolute truth concerning bereaved people. Fundamentally there are many truths out there and another researcher's analysis may feature other themes not represented in the present study. The original transcribed inquiry is available on request.

Lillian's Narrative

During the past year Lillian had experienced the loss of her ex-husband. Although he had recently remarried, Lillian and her ex-husband still had strong feelings for each other, and they had discussed the possibility of reconciliation. Lillian also lost her son in a freak accident 11 years ago, which was a very traumatic experience for her. Years earlier, she lost a one-month-old baby boy. The following themes are a reconstruction of her personal story of death and bereavement.

Socio-political context

Characteristics of the historical socio-political aspects and the present socio-political aspects powerfully came to the fore in almost every aspect of Lillian's story of death and bereavement. Since her story is engulfed by a strong socio-political context, the researcher decided to begin the analysis with this central theme, so as to familiarize the reader with the context of Lillian's story of death and mourning.

Three subthemes emerged under the umbrella theme labelled 'socio-political context', namely the *political institution*, *social context* and *ethnic customs*.

Political institution

In the 'old South Africa', during the apartheid regime, the dominant group did not exert an influence on Lillian or her community as regards to the actual task of mourning. It appears too that they did not enforce or coerce her or her community into follow a Western/European way of grieving. She emphatically stated:

“No, no they not do like the white people”

Compassionate leave granted to individuals that allowed them time and space to mourn their loss has always been available in the past, and it is still available for the bereaved today.

Lillian said:

“It was still the same it didn't change”.

During the apartheid regime of South Africa it appeared that the indigenous South Africans buried their infant babies in their homes. Apparently it was not a practice to register the death of infants amongst the indigenous people at the mortician at that time. Although the law stipulated that the birth and death of infants had to be correctly registered, the indigenous people did not abide by this law and thus the government at the time was unaware of these births and deaths. However, this changed with the new government after 1994. She stated:

“It’s from this..., new government it stopped. I don’t know because that time the certificate to us was not a problem to be with a certificate for the baby not the death certificate, like now the child is born now... it must be there must be the paper but that old time the child can be born in the house even you can die there it was just buried. But now you can be in court”.

It seems since the “new government” had been part of the unlegislated burial of infants and were aware of what practices were taking place they have now therefore enforced the legislation for indigenous people to bury infants at graveyards in the same manner as adults were buried. The bereaved is now given a number which indicates where the infant will be buried. She said:

“Because there the paper is already signed the baby is born and even if he died they must know it died and they give number to them and you have to take even the number of the hole to the graveyard, grave number”.

It appears that in the past during the old regime, the bereaved and their family had no means to provide a decent burial for the deceased. They had to make their own funeral arrangements and build their own coffins since there were no official morticians available for them. She stated:

“No, I think in the old government when first if someone has died, they were just taking the wood and make self the box(coffin) in the house and then they put him in the box and they go to the grave. But now... they take it to the mortuary. That time it was different”.

The actual grieving process may have been affected in the apartheid time, since the bereaved had to source out wood for a coffin and arrange the details of the funeral that morticians do today. Indigenous people are now able to take out funeral policies and to ensure a decent burial for their loved ones. The “new” government has therefore given pride and self-respect back to her people, and the bereaved are thus able to bury their loved ones with dignity.

Social context

It appears that the customs and laws that govern Lillian’s community have been socially constructed by their forefathers many generations ago, and are therefore simply accepted and not questioned today by the community. Lillian said:

“No you just grow up like that. It is from long ago. Yes, just you see as you go to the family”.

Concerning all her customs and traditions regarding death and bereavement, it seems that Lillian and her community believe the customs have been passed down from generation to generation and should be adhered to. There are also practices that are forbidden which the people should not practice and they evidently do not. She said:

“Ja, they tell us we mustn’t.”

It appears that they believe that if certain customs are not adhered to, then the bereaved could become ill and will not survive. Since they believe they could die, they therefore obey all their customary laws. She said:

“Yes, their answer is “You will get sick... other people, they don’t listen but they’re not surviving, they not surviving. They start sick and die because they say too many times there is no other sickness to make your body to swell it is only the sick that come from someone who died”.

The Tswana people seem to believe that the person will develop certain symptoms which are only attributed to the illness of not carrying out the specified custom. It seems that they

believe that if one adheres to cultural practices, one will indeed be protected from the illness that the death of the lost loved could pass on to. She said:

“Uh, too much time they say if you don’t do, you can think you are alright, but after long time you can start sick. Yes, we don’t question. We just believe we can”.

Ethnic beliefs

It appears that the indigenous people have certain beliefs concerning their society. They collectively believe in the supernatural and the powers thereof, and that certain people in the community have the unnatural powers to cause harm to another being. Lillian stated:

“The black people, you know, they have certain things that they make, they point to one another, ‘Yes he died because of you made the medicine, you make this and this’, ‘You give him the poison in tea’, there too much of that coming with the black people”.

It seems that a concoction of some sort can be given to a person to cause harm or death. Additionally it is believed that certain supernatural activities can actually physically affect an individual in a negative way. She said:

“Yes the ‘muti’ (medicine), yes it’s working. Ja, they can give you something and they can make another thing you can’t know, maybe just talk your name, that thing will go to you and kill you that medicine.”

There was no doubt in Lillian’s mind that these unexplained supernatural events do indeed take place. She fervently stated:

It happens!”

She believed that her ex-husband’s widow had planned and plotted his death. Lillian described certain incidences that had occurred before his death which had led to these suspicions. She said:

“Yes, I can tell you like Joseph... first he was with this woman who had four children, but they’re big. They have one... she has one boy this boy is always drunk because

Joseph another time he sick and another time he was better. When he (the son) was with another friend drank there, he says this guy [Joseph] when he will die we will have the jack box”.

People were suspicious of Joseph’s new wife, since her three previous husbands had all passed away. Lillian said:

“Because this, the third one, I heard from the policeman... he was staying in Makapanstad, they chase her away with the children, all this group because now you must know this Joseph was not even being together with this woman not even two years but not yet and then they make the certificate (marriage) September and October he died, the marriage certificate”.

The day Joseph died he had apparently drunk a cup of ‘tea’ made by his wife. Given that Lillian and her society strongly believe in supernatural mysticism and that her previous three husbands had passed away suddenly, foul play was suspected in Joseph’s death. She said:

“Nut that day he (Joseph) died from the morning maybe from 9 o’ clock up to 11 o’clock he was with one of the men he work with at Aventura they were home they were off they were not working. He was with him and they were working in the garden, putting water in the garden together. They say that woman she come with tea, two cups of tea she give them tea. Now that guy he say no me I don’t drink tea, Joseph he take the tea and drink. After he [Joseph] drank tea, that man says me I’m going because my wife is going to another place and I must got to give her things to go. Joseph said “No, I’m not feeling alright I am going to sleep”, which was the last minute he see him. That man he said the time he got to his house the phone call was already coming...‘Joseph has died’”.

Lillian and her family strongly believe that Joseph did not die from natural causes or from his illness, but rather at the hand of his new wife since she wanted his money. She stated:

“Yes, because this woman, this Joseph is the fourth man to be died from this woman. But always she kills them, but she don't find the chance for the money. Because they already fix everything, they force him to fix everything, look even the names of the

children was already on Aventura [policy]. Everything was already fixed, now after they see everything is fixed now... even now all that children they found the money all with that surname of that woman”.

Evidently the children next door responded to his cries of help, and assisted him onto his bed, and it was the children who explained to Lillian how he had died. She said:

“Yes, because people the next door the children are already bigger they say he call one of them of that children; he said, “Come, come, come, come”, when they come, they find Joseph, he was nearest the bed he was just holding himself like this (demonstrates his position of kneeling next to the bed). Now they pick up him out him on bed, they put him nicely on bed now that time he died. The same time he died he showed something was wrong with... (Lillian demonstrates that he held his stomach)”.

Lillian proceeded to tell how she believed that the people of her culture and community will also use poison to kill an individual. She said:

“I think nowadays, they don’t use too much of these things, they just take the poison. Yes, they make too much things, too much things maybe they take there’s another poison black people eh, black poison for the rats, they take they can put in the food or in the... that things are very small. Not the pellets, the powder, it’s very small, it’s very small can be put maybe three drops or five drops and then nobody knows”.

Lillian stated that if one suspected foul play in any way, unless one was financially well off, one is unable have the death investigated since it costs money to have a post-mortem conducted. She said;

“You know the problem is, when the body is in the (coffin)... died and if you are allow the mortuary to open...to look what’s happening, you give the money but if you don’t pay the money, they can’t open”.

When the researcher questioned Lillian as to whether the matter could be referred to the police for an investigation, given the suspicious nature of her ex-husband’s death, she firmly replied:

“No, without the money they can’t, they won’t”.

Death perception and Belief system

Since Lillian’s perception of death and her perception of the dead person are defined by her values and beliefs, it seems appropriate to name the following theme as ‘Death perception and belief system’, in order to reflect.

Lillian has a basic and obedient reality when coping with the death of a loved one. It seemed that she did not question death, since death was part of life. She said:

“When he dies, he dies”

When Lillian lost her son in a freak accident, she was left shattered. However, she appeared very realistic about his death. Evidently her son was at work when an engine of a motor car fell on top of him and he was killed instantly. Lillian explained:

“But I tell myself I said ‘Thanks God he died’ because the way that accident was, I thought if he not die it will be terrible. Maybe he’ll sit in wheelchair or would not be right in the head because it was a bad accident.... I just say thanks I cry but I thank you God”.

The death of her ex-husband Joseph however left her restless and suspicious. Joseph was apparently sickly but he still held a job. He was working in his garden on a day off when took ill and subsequently died.

As her ex-husband had remarried, Lillian did not have any authority over his body. She, along with his family and children, were therefore left in the dark as to what caused his death. Although they suspected foul play, they did not have the funds to investigate their suspicions and were annoyed that Joseph’s wife would not cooperate. She said:

“Because if maybe she don’t know she if she knew the pain we feel inside, she can pay the money to the Bafa and they must check what happening .We say she know how he died, because if she feel pain like us she can ask them to check what happening”.

Lillian and her family were very angry that a post-mortem was not conducted and they suspected that the new wife had had something to do with his death, since there was a large sum of money to be inherited. She recalled:

“We were angry we were cross, another thing that make all family to be cross, why didn’t if she see we are cross, we are crying, we say you kill him why didn’t to make our hearts to be alright to allow Bafa to open him to check what.... what killed him. Because that people (Bafa) can’t just open it, you must take them money”.

The tragedy of the death highlighted a consequence of living in poverty: Lillian and her family apparently did not have the funds nor the authority to pay either the funeral parlour or the police to “investigate” the death of her ex-husband or to exhume his body. She said:

“Eh it was just that we were eh, we didn’t know what to do and we have no money, because if we have money even after they put him to the grave we can tell them to go and check what happened.”

Since there is a certain amount of folklore, witchcraft and superstitious beliefs in various groups and societies in South Africa it was not clearly established by the researcher whether there was in fact any foul play involved. Nonetheless, Lillian herself certainly believed that Joseph’s present wife was indeed guilty of killing him.

If a person is suffering or ill, then according to Lillian, she would be able to accept the passing away more readily since there would not be suffering anymore. She stated that a person was not able measure another’s pain, since the experience of pain is personal and the pain is invisible. Therefore if an individual is in pain and suffering then one should not question the loss. Lillian said:

“Yes... it is better when the die because I can say I sick and you can see I am sick, but you don’t feel how I feel and always when they talk, they say, *now* the sickness is finish. Yes, he was sick but now he is alright because when you are dead you are not sick anymore.”

It appeared that people of colour have not adopted a Westernized viewpoint with regards to the acceptance of death. According to Lillian, she adheres to her own particular traditional cultural beliefs and values, and it seemed that she has not been influenced by a Westernized viewpoint of death. She said:

“All the black people, they not do like the white people”.

However, Lillian did claim to have no knowledge of whether other cultures adhered to a Westernized way of perceiving death. She stated:

“No, no, I don’t know another culture”.

It appears that the night before the funeral the body of the deceased is brought to the home of the widow or the bereaved in a coffin, and remains there overnight. The close family and mourners spend the night with the bereaved talking and reminiscing about the deceased. She said:

“Yes, we can talk to him.” (and about the deceased)

However, if the death was not a natural one, but rather was violent in nature or if the deceased was shot or burnt, then according to Lillian’s culture, the deceased is not permitted to spend the night in the home of the bereaved. Rather, the coffin remains at the mortuary until the morning of the funeral. The following day it is brought to the home of the bereaved, but is placed outside the home in a tent before the second service. Lillian said:

“Yes, only, only like someone who died because of the burn, we don’t allow in the house, it comes in the morning come to the house but we don’t get in the house it come from the mortuary, put box in the tent outside to the people, and then they don’t open the box. Like, if someone who maybe shoot we don’t allow.”

Regarding *religion*, Lillian admitted to having a belief in a higher being, and stated that she belonged to the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC). She stated:

“Yes, I believe in God. The Zion Christian church believes in God”.

It appears that Lillian believes that death is not the end, but rather a passage of rite. She believed in a Christian God, therefore her belief in the *afterlife* was based on Christianity. She was certain as to where the spirit of the deceased goes to once an individual has passed away. She said:

“They go to heaven”.

It appeared however that heaven was not the only place where the dead proceed to. It was apparent that there was another place that the deceased could also depart to when he or she had died. She said

“Yes, when maybe... we know that when we go there are two places”.

In order for her cultural and religious community to live a righteous life and to be sure of their entrance to heaven in the afterlife, the people are often told of the unpleasant fate that awaits them if they go to ‘hell’. Thus the fear of Satan is enforced and a life of righteousness is encouraged. Lillian stated:

“They go to Satan. Yes, okay we believe when you make right you will go to heaven and when you not make right, even we in our house we are talking we say ‘Don’t make so if you make this the day you will die you will go to this Satan and someone was died and he came back, to make the people scared, someone was died but he came back he said there by heaven he see too much people they were praying and dancing but now on another side, people were crying but the fire was coming out.”

Lillian did acknowledge that she believed in “hell” too, but it seemed that if one made amends before one died then going to hell was not one’s fate. She said:

“No, if they make alright”.

However, if a person died and had not made amends with his Maker, it seemed that once he had gone to hell there was no return. Lillian said:

“Yes, because there when you go there the fire..., even the fire here today, to us they burn in that fire you can’t come back. Even we know when we go to the fire there you can’t come back”.

It appeared that there was uncertainty as to who would be fit to go to heaven. Lillian was not sure if she would go to heaven since she believed that only those who obeyed the Ten Commandments and those who were the righteous would inherit the kingdom of Heaven. She said:

“There it’s not easy... that I can’t say, I remember I don’t know in which page in the bible it says, ‘There is no one who is right’. Now who will know this one is right only I can say I can’t say I am alright even the old boss he says, ‘You must read bible’. I read bible but I can’t say I know bible. One thing I must know in the bible is, the Ten Commandments. If I know Ten Commandments, I must do it I know bible and if I walk on top of that Ten Commandments then I will go to heaven”.

It seemed that the Tswana ethnic group of people do believe in spirits, which implies there is a world for the dead, they believe too that their ancestors and the spirit are the one and same, and the living can communicate to God through the ancestors. Lillian stated:

“The ancestors we can say we take them like the angel, the angel can take the words we can say to Jesus and Jesus can take the words to God”.

It seemed that the ancestors of her people were recognized as angels who appeared to have the ability to communicate directly with God through Jesus, and could therefore intercede on behalf of the living back on earth.

It appeared that not only did Lillian believe in spirits, but that she also had an encounter with her late son’s spirit. She recalled:

“Yes we believe, we believe. Like my son, I can tell you something, like my son, I was crying day and night.... and when I sleep....I will see too much things about him”.

Lillian seemed unclear as to whether she was actually dreaming or if indeed she really did hear the deceased spirit speak to her whilst she was in mourning for her son. She said:

“Yes, I think it was the spirit but... it was making... it was coming a different thing to me. The way he was, he was one who likes to run always like when he was working he was always..., quick, quick and always when he was working, he take out his clothes (shirt). Even the body the day we took the body from Vaalbank, we find the body without shirt, because when he work always he take out the shirt. Yes, but last i was crying everyday day and night. The last day I say now I stop to cry.... I hear the voice..., his voice..., he just say ‘Maam!’, and it was daily I was crying. I just opened, because my bed was nearest the window, I just opened the curtains... to check where is he I didn’t see anything and from that day..., I did cry but not like before I just hear the voice from him ‘Maam’”.

It appeared that Lillian truly believed that her late son’s spirit was trying to tell her that the time of mourning should cease and apparently she did not hear his spirit thereafter again. She said:

“Yes to stop crying. Yes, i take it like that”.

Lillian’s children also believed in talking with the spirits. When their father had died, and they had concerns regarding their inheritance, they apparently went to the grave to speak to the deceased, in an effort to obtain clarity as to how they should proceed with regards to their inheritance. She stated:

“Like my children, that time they have problems they go to the grave to their father to talk. He wanted my children to be in that place (inherit his house) because we don’t know how he died and that woman there she know before that man died he always talk in front of her she must know they are going him and this man were going to look for another place so he can give his children this place but up to now, that woman is still sitting there. Now the children when they think they go to the grave”.

Mourning procedures and practices

Under the theme heading of Mourning procedures and practices, the subthemes *rituals* and *ceremonies*, have been included since Lillian's mourning practices are defined by cultural and traditional rituals and ceremonies.

Rituals

It is customary to keep the body of the deceased at the mortuary for up to a week. It seems that this custom was initially implemented, because many of the mourners are usually labourers and therefore funerals could only be held over the weekends.

“Always like the ‘big people’ (adults)... the whole week because... we the black people we do it Saturday or Sunday, only the weekend because people are working”.

It appears that in Lillian's culture, it is traditional to bring the deceased body from the mortuary to the home of the bereaved the night before the funeral where the loved ones all gather together to pay homage to the lost loved one. She stated:

“Okay, after he died if he comes from the mortuary, like Fridays he always coming to sleep in the house, the body. The body sleeps in the house and same time the body come in the house there will be more people and they wait for him and then they sing the song of the church and there must be the *moroottie* (minister) there to prayer”

According to Lillian, it seems that death can denote a sense of unnatural defilement. Since the people of Lillian's ethnic group seem to be superstitious in nature and believe in the supernatural, it therefore seems important that a minister be present at the gathering so that he can pray for the deceased. She said:

“Yes, the minister must be there to pray for him and then after they pray... they must open the box. The coffin yes, to see if it's him all the family and the friends all in the house everyone who wants”

It appears that once certain prayers have been conducted, it is deemed 'safe' to open the coffin. Once the people have witnessed that it is indeed the deceased in the coffin, implying that perhaps the wrong body can be brought to the house of the bereaved, the ritual and eulogy continues throughout the night. Lillian said:

“Yes, and then afterwards they just close it and the whole night... maybe they can just tell the people to start praying by maybe 10 o'clock and like up to tomorrow morning. The whole night they will talk the.... way, the life of this man. Where he was working, where he was doing his school and everything like that and how many children he had, when did he marry like that like that you see”.

It appears that not only do they talk *about* the deceased when they pay tribute to him or her but it seems that they also talk *to* the deceased and say their final “goodbyes”. Lillian said:

“Yes, we can talk to him. Yes, we can talk to him. We just say, ‘We didn't think we would lose you like this’ we just say goodbye, we don't talk much”.

The next morning when the customs of praying, talking and singing have been completed, the mourners go home and come back later for the various ceremonies and funeral procession. She said:

“Yes, all through the night maybe until uh ,5o'clock early in the morning and after that the people they go home maybe to bath and prepare for to take the body to the grave”.

The above-mentioned rite for her ex-husband was not conducted at Lillian's home since he had remarried however she said the ritual for their deceased son was carried out “here in our house”.

It seems that it is custom for the bereaved to view the deceased body at the mortuary if they so wish to. However, when Lillian's son died, the Mortician transported her and her ex-husband to Vaalbank to identify her son's body and they then sent it back to Modimolle where he had resided. She said:

“The body I see... to the mortuary... Yes, but... no, me and the mortuary, the people of the mortuary we went to Vaalbank they take me there and i see the body there. I went with his father, we went together”.

Lillian did attend her ex-husband’s funeral, but she did not take part in arranging of the funeral. His new wife took care of the funeral arrangement along with Lillian’s children. She recalled:

“We were allowed to go to the funeral, but I yes I did go. The other wife did the funeral arrangements with my children”.

It appeared that cultural customs dictate that the family or close loved ones make the decisions concerning the funeral, and when her son died Lillian and her husband arranged their son’s funeral. She said:

“We did it together”

Therefore the funeral procedures and decisions are considered to be a collective family affair. It appears that the funeral procedures regarding children and adults are different. All are welcome to attend the funeral of a deceased adult. However, it seems that only children who have experienced the loss of an infant sibling, are permitted together with all the adults, to attend the funeral. She stated:

“It’s not the same. It is the same to the graveyard, but to the house, first they will say if he was still young, only the big people, only the older people can bury the child but not like us, us you know all people can come to the funeral but if it is a baby we don’t do it only maybe the big people the children of the family, but not the children of the other people, only the family”.

According to Lillian’s customs, a daughter-in-law is not permitted to attend the funeral of her father-in-law. She is also forbidden to go to the services at the graveyard or see the body of her father-in-law since it is a customary law that one must comply with. She said:

“Like my father-in-law, if he died I mustn’t be like the whole week I can be with the people but when the time for the mortuary to bring that coffin box home I must not look I must go another place. They say the law don’t allow it, it is the culture of us the daughter-in-law.”

After the funeral service at the graveyard, the congregation works their way back to the house of the bereaved which has been prepared and cleaned whilst the mourners were at the graveyard. She said:

“Yes, no when we go to the... like me it was my husband who was died if the body going out, one of the family a big lady maybe with another woman they must clean the whole place, like the house, the yard, to be clean before that people come back.”

Once they arrive back to the house it seems that there is a purifying ritual which all the mourners adhere to. The bereaved is respected and given preference to the ‘cleansing’ of her hands. Lillian explained:

“And from the graveyard we wash the hands... and then we start eating, alright but we must wait for old people before all people come there, they put the big bath, maybe they can put two or three outside the yard, we must wash our hands but before we wash our hands the one who like me who husband died (the widow) must wash my hands first in that water. Even if they come first they are not allowed to because they must wait for me to come and wash my hands first”.

The cleansing or purifying ritual is a religious custom, performed to symbolically and physically cleanse away the “darkness” of death. It seems therefore that the people believe the really could be tainted by death and its features. She said:

“It’s a religion, it must be that way. Yes, maybe we can say we take out...I can say maybe to the funeral, when you went there you come from there you are like black you are black, let me say like that... like black, now when you go home, you take out, you wash the thing that maybe touched you from that side”.

It appeared that in Lillian's church, the minister sprinkles water as a means of consecration. Therefore the ritual of purification performed on the mourners after the funeral procession may be said to resemble the 'church sprinkling'. She explained:

"Oh okay, in our church I am a ZCC church we... in our church not only when we come from there funeral, every like uh Sunday of every day when we get to the church before we getting in the door of the church... we wash ourselves. They take the water with something and they..., they sprinkle the face, the back and under."

This religious custom is not just reserved for the people belonging to the Zionist Christian Church, but rather it seems to be a custom practiced in other groups such as the Sotho and Zulu African people. The symbolic meaning behind the 'washing' seems to have a positive significance for the non-believers or no church goers. Lillian stated:

"Yes, the same thing, they do the same. Even this people who are not in the ZCC the whole group of people that went to the funeral these other people they like this, they like to wash the whole body like us.... because you will find there too maybe with the bath... with water and then the *Morootie* of us maybe he stand on the other side with a bucket of the water and then he throw on us. And the other people they wash their hands there but after they come this side with us they want to be sprinkled. And after he put us from front back under the foot and then we put in our hands and then we wash them and then we get inside and we start eating".

Although the mourners are subjected to a cleansing or purifying ritual they are still not really considered sanctified from the "darkness" of death. It appears that the sick and the infants are to be removed to another house since they may be tainted if exposed to the mourners. She stated:

"Yes. Like in your culture in our culture if like we have the baby in the house if someone comes from the graveyard he mustn't get in that room.... and the baby's there. Yes like disease he can start up to... he can start up and maybe he can die. Like if someone is sick in that room, someone maybe of the family... like when someone in the house is died and we have maybe a baby child or maybe someone is sick then... we must take them to another house to another family. They must leave yes like that".

When the mourners come back from the graveyard it seems that the refreshments are more like a feast. Food is lavishly prepared for all who attend the funeral. She said:

“Yes, we... black people we cook like lots of food like to the wedding”.

Special food is prepared for the bereaved widow, which is also prepared according to traditional customs from the day of the death of the husband until after the funeral seven days later. Lillian stated:

“And the time that they (doing) the cooking... from that time, after that man has died, they are not cooking my food with other people’s food. There must be special person who has already her husband has died must cook for me”.

The person preparing the food must therefore be a widow too. Not only are special dishes prepared for the bereaved, but culturally it seems that the chefs are requested to use special pots to prepare the food too. She said:

“The culture... I just... they say the pots of the one who have someone who died mustn’t use to the group that people must have the pots the other side. Me, I must be with special woman who cook for me with special pot and special plate”.

There are elderly ladies that sleep in her home during the week before the funeral and it appears that these mourners are also fed specially-prepared food. Lillian stated:

“Even after they cook, there is special dishes they take every time to give you food there in that room. We feed like the old people, the old people they will sleep with me I’m not sleeping alone”.

During the taking of refreshments, the bereaved is to remain in a room in the house and it was apparent that the supporters and mourners have this opportunity to express their condolences to the bereaved. She said:

“Go straight to the room. They talking and another person maybe come in the room because maybe I’m sitting there in the room and they will come there and say, ‘Sorry, sorry, I am going, I just come to say goodbye, goodbye’ and then they go”.

Ceremonies

The ceremonies that comprise the mourning procedures all seem to be custom- and law-abiding. It appears that culturally, if Lillian’s father-in-law passed away, she would only be allowed to attend the mourning service conducted at the house. She explained:

“You can go to the service by the house, but first the thing you mustn’t be there, especially when the box is in the house. And when the box is going to the funeral, you can help the people who maybe do the house to clean, sweep and other things”

According to Lillian, the funeral procedure consists of “three services” or ceremonies. The first ceremony is conducted the night before the funeral when the coffin is brought to the home of the bereaved. This ceremony is open to all mourners and the minister. Lillian said:

“Like the whole night everyone who wants to, turns up and talks about him, they talk and then they pray and then they read bible. That’s in the night up to the morning they reading bible up to 5 o’clock. And the people they going home to bathe and to be ready and maybe like half past six they start another service”

Once the night ceremony has concluded, the mourners go home and prepare for the second ceremony, which is held again at the house of the bereaved where again the mourners come together to pray and pay their respect to the deceased. She said:

“Now they take the box from.... the house put outside maybe in the tent... they open him again. Yes, the *marootti* does the morning service before we go to the grave...the service is just to, uh, pray, maybe like the people who were sitting in with him, and then they talk how maybe he was sick, they talk of uh maybe the problem of the accident...And there they start praying again up to where they take her to the grave and then there is another service”.

The third service is conducted at the grave, and this is the last opportunity for the bereaved and the mourners to say farewell to the deceased. Since there is bible reading and prayer, it may be considered a religious experience and a time to probably look at the death through the lens of God and the character of God. There may be some though who would probably see God through the lens of the death. Lillian said:

“They just pray, they sing and then the Morootti can pray and can read the bible and they start maybe the box going down and then they call family to put maybe the flowers to say goodbye in the hole. And after that they start to close the hole and then they put the flower on top of it after they close and they pray and then we go back home. And then the last thing they call is the family, and the family, the family person that he come he must tell people they must pass to the house there is something to drink or something to eat”.

Since there are three various ceremonies, that commence from the night the coffin arrives at the house, continuing through the next day to honour the deceased, it therefore appears that the bereaved has a considerable amount of time to consider their loss from both an emotional and a religious point of view.

It appears that culturally there are no further ceremonies to commemorate the anniversaries of the death. However, it was stated that on Good Friday during the Easter period, the bereaved person may go to the grave and light a candle in honour of the lost loved one, and may ‘talk’ with the deceased. It seems that this was a personal decision for Lillian and that some people go to the graveyard if they need to resolve their problems with the lost loved one. She said:

“Yes, yes. hmmm, many times.... maybe we just go like Good Friday. The time I’m going there the time we put the candles. Yes we light them and talk with him. Yes, only I talk about me, but another people they go when they have problems”.

It appeared that besides talking to the deceased, the lighting of the candle on Easter Friday is symbolic of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the deceased must too be risen or resurrected. She said:

“Just take it the same as Jesus. Ja, they must they must wake up and then go up there. Go up to Jesus”.

Burial vs. Cremation

The majority of burials are conducted on Saturdays, with scheduled for Sundays. However, it seems that children are buried during the week.

“But maybe if it’s a child, if it’s a child, we bury them in the middle of the week”.

Since funerals are only conducted over the weekend for adults and the attending of a funeral is a community affair, it seems that one is left with only the week to therefore bury the children.

According to Lillian, there seems to be no particular ritual or practice concerning the coffin. The body is placed in the coffin in the standard manner at the mortuary and then brought to the house of the deceased. She did, however, admit that other cultures or ethnic groups may be different. She said:

“No, no, I don’t know about other people but no we don’t”.

It appeared that Ancestors are able to be angered if the deceased is not buried at “home”. However “home” in this instance does not necessarily mean the place where the deceased was born, but rather “home” is considered to be where the deceased had lived with their spouse and children.

“Yes they can (be angered). At the home, because the home always first they say they be buried like the baby... who is just buried in the house”

When Lillian had lost an infant just after she was married, the infant was buried *in* her house. She said:

“The year I was married, I was married when I was pregnant, nine months pregnant. The last weekend they marry me, the second weekend and that child was born. Just stayed one month and one weekend, and then it died”.

The place to bury a baby during the “old South African” regime was explained as such:

“Now there, that place, if the child is very young, it is buried in the house. Yes, in the house, in a room like this room (indicates the room she is sitting in). They open like in the corner there (points to the corner). They open a hole and they go down and after they go down, they open..., No, we put it in something, we wrap nice, because we are not going to put the soil on top of him. That’s why they open like this (indicates with her hand) and like this and we push it under”

Lillian explained that the infant is covered with cloth and placed in the coffin and then buried. She said:

“(wrap the body) in the material and we put it in the box and we just put the box down”.

It appeared that while Lillian did not know the reason why infants were buried in that manner, she accepted that it was a traditional custom that was to be obeyed. She said:

Yes, the child from one day up to maybe three months we bury in the house. I don’t know but now they don’t allow, the Government don’t allow it, that time it was the law”.

Cremation did not appear to be an option for any African culture, and especially for Lillian. She alleged that the belief in burial rather than cremation may be based on biblical beliefs. It further seemed that one could have contact with the spirits only if they were buried; therefore cremation was not a consideration. She said:

“Uh, no we don’t burn. Everyone... we don’t burn. I don’t know another culture. I think it is from the bible because we believe it if we bury someone and maybe you want to talk to them at the grave you can go”.

Bereavement Behaviour

Under the theme bereavement behaviour two subthemes emerged, namely *emotional and physical responses* and *pattern and period of grief*.

Emotional and physical response

When Lillian heard the news that her son had passed away, she was devastated. She was extremely traumatized and she experienced many emotional and physiological responses to the dreadful news of her son's death. She stated:

“Ja, it was bad... it was very bad to hear. Uh, that policeman he come into the house, he find me he just knock the door, I come out, he just ask my name and ‘Is you the mother of Johannes?’ I said, ‘Yes’ and he said, ‘No we just come because we find the phone from Vaalbank to the police station they said your son he died because of accident’ you see... now I just sit down and cry. That man he just walk away..., the thing...I feel bad, that was, it was not alright with that man when he come”.

It appears that the police, who reported the death to Lillian, broke the news to her in an uncaring manner and he evidently left abruptly, leaving her in a state of absolute shock. She seemed disillusioned and shocked that he would be so cold and uncaring. She said:

“Yes, if the things are like that, he must call somebody, he must ask, ‘Are you alone?’ There uh maybe next door you can call someone to be with you before he talk with me. But he didn't do like that”.

The shocking news of her son's death left her so distraught she could not walk and had to move along on her knees to call for assistance from her neighbours. She recalled:

“Me, I just walk with my knees up to the fence to call that people. Now they hear me crying....,ja, I was without power..., ja, I was in shock, but I not have any power, I'm just crying, I call, “...now they come they ask what is happening, I tell them, now there was somewhere, somewhere look for the phone number I give them there as phone in the house, I give them the phone to phone my mother”.

Her mother and family had responded to the call and came over to her house to comfort her, but recalled how it was a horrifying experience for her. She said:

“Yes, they came they came that day which was maybe like after five. They did stay with me. Yes, it was a terrible time”.

It appeared that Lillian was deeply shocked and there seemed to be total disbelief amongst her and her family. They evidently tried to contact the gentleman who was with her son at the time of the accident; however, they were unable to converse with him. She stated:

“Yes, it was a big shock because even that..., *Yes!* I didn’t believe...I didn’t believe because...i didn’t believe because we tried to call that guy who was with him to go to tell us in the house, he didn’t come... but he said, ‘Ja, he’s there... he’s dead’. He didn’t come to the house, now we phone the police station; they said, ‘No he’s here, we catch him, we close him into the prison’, now we went up to there now we wanted to talk to him they said we can’t talk to him. They didn’t allow us to talk to him”.

It seems before she was able to identify her son’s body she experienced a sense of complete disbelief for a few days: She stated:

“That Monday, Tuesday, even Wednesday before I see the body I didn’t believe it, I think maybe they just call us”.

According to Lillian, apparently all people experience a similar sense of shock and disbelief. She said:

“Yes they have the shock, they don’t believe because like me I, it just come with that words ‘your son died’. I think, maybe they lie, maybe I will just see him coming just like that, I cry but I’m looking all over maybe he will come. No, no, it was not easy to believe it because of morning from home to the job, you see if maybe someone was sick, yes I can believe quick he was died but that was *ewish* not easy”.

It seemed therefore that since she had seen her son that morning, it was difficult to comprehend and it seemed so unreal that he was now gone. According to Lillian, it appeared that knowing the person was sick or ailing made death seem more believable.

When the mortician took Lillian to identify the body at the mortuary in the town where he had had the accident she admitted that after she had seen the body of her son, the loss of her son had in that moment become a reality. She said:

“Ja after, no after I see the body I knew I believe he was gone....because he died Monday, and we went to take the body Wednesday”.

It appears that in the first seven days of one’s loss (before the funeral), it is customary for Lillian and her ethnic group to deeply mourn and bewail their loved one through the emotional release of crying. She recalled:

“When I think, always I was crying”.

After the funeral, which is held seven days after the death of the loved one, the intense mourning is considered to have been completed. She said:

“No more mourning, it is finished, only a week”.

When Lillian stated that “it is finished”, it implied that the intense grieving was considered over. This may be because the bereaved has relentlessly cried, wailed and lamented for seven days, it may be considered that in that time span, the bereaved has mourned as much as was necessary to accept the reality of the loss fully.

However, it seems that the intense mourning Lillian conducted for her son in those seven days was not “finished” and seven days was not sufficient, at least for her. She had admitted that she had continued to grieve for another three months thereafter. She recalled:

“Yes you can. My heart was sore...I think I can say up to maybe three months. No, no, no..., not only for seven days”.

When her son died, Lillian stated that had she received the support she had expected to receive from her family it would still have been distressing for her. She recalled:

“No, no, it was sad, it was sad”.

It has been 12 years since Lillian’s son passed away, and she had become quite emotional when she confessed that she still missed him. She tearfully said:

“Yes, (very emotional). I miss him...”

Lillian’s three sons were also devastated at the loss of their brother and then again at the loss of their father. It seems that they did indeed grieve for the seven days allocated for their mourning and did not cry again after these seven days, except for the one son (who was twenty four years old) who had also continued to grieve. It appears that her late son’s funeral was a very emotional one, which intensified their grieving. Lillian stated:

“They lost... because my children are not the children who can talk too much. But I see them that time they lost... they cried. Even my son, it was another child he was singing the gospel choir. That day there was 12 choirs was coming to the funeral because they know him to come to talk about him. Now it’s a thing (the choir singing) to maybe give those children to cry now they just cry that week but after that week they see how they have lost and they are not crying anymore. And to their father also, they cry after they hear their father is gone, they cry but the middle one, Jeremiah, is the one I see him after we buried him (father) he was still crying. Maybe after we buried him, he cried also a week”.

Lillian admitted to being angry at her ex-husband’s new wife for not allowing them to have a post mortem conducted on him to determine the cause of his death. However, she did not believe she had the right to be angry at anyone for the loss of her loved ones. She said:

“No, you can’t say why God? And then you can’t say, ‘Why doctor?’ We know always the doctor they fight... they try... but there can be loss”.

Since loss affects one on a physiological level too, when Lillian's son died she stressed that her eating patterns had also changed, indicating how distressing her loss was. She recalled:

“Yes because even I was not eating alright... when I think always I was just crying”.

When Lillian lost her son, she says that she dreamt of him often, real dreams of just how he appeared when he was still alive. She said the dreams had “stopped” when she heard his spirit speak to her. She recalled:

“Only my son I was dreaming of him a lot but not now from that time”.

Although she had dreamt of her son, she did not dream of her ex-husband. Her sons, on the other hand, did dream of their father for some time after his death. She said:

“No not once..., and even the children ..., the young one and Jeremiah are the ones always who tell me that they dream of him”.

Period and duration of grief

Lillian alleged that grieving is an individual experience and that it was difficult to determine the time span for the emotional release of crying. She said:

“Oh, there I can't say, it depends”.

There is a customary time allocated for the bereaved to be in mourning. The allocated time of mourning depends on who the deceased is in relation to the bereaved. The relationship between the deceased and the bereaved is apparently indicated by a customary dress code that the bereaved adheres to (to be discussed under the next theme). When Lillian lost her son it seemed that the noticeable grieving period was a period of six months.

“You can take one of that colours, black blue or purple, you put it there on your shoulders for about 6 months”

However, although in Lillian's culture the time to mourn is specified by cultural norms, the emotion of crying seems to be indefinite. She said:

“No. But like my son....I cry even up to now”

And if one has lost a spouse, the mourning period appears to be longer; Lillian stated;

“And that thing, it takes a year”

It appeared that Lillian believed that if one did not grieve successfully, one could become depressed. It seemed that if grief was inhibited and not physically and emotionally released it will have repercussions for the bereaved. She said:

“Eh, I think that can happen”.

According to Lillian, to inhibit one’s grief is not conducive to one’s health. It seems that mourning may leave one “weak in the knees”. She alleged that it was also not the cultural belief to inhibit grieve, since they believe that an individual should openly display their emotions and not suppress them. She stated:

“No, no you must cry and cry and... and be finish, up to yourself you must finish I think there is something pumping in the heart and then you must... it must be out, you must cry. If you not cry, it’s easy you can just fall down in the dust. But not too much noise, but if you just told yourself not crying, after you will see him fainting. You will just see them pick him up because he cried inside. You must cry open, you must cry”.

Public display of grief vs. Private display of grief

Lillian’s story of her public and private grief is displayed and defined by ritualized and customized ordinances.

It seems that when the funeral is over and the seven days of intense mourning is completed, the bereaved still displays her emotions of sorrow in privacy of her home. She said:

“You’re still crying”.

Although Lillian had fulfilled the grieving specifications for her deceased ex-husband, she nonetheless admitted that she continued to grieve her loss in private. She alleged:

“No I think it happens because like now like my husband died, I can be with you now here and we talk something but the time I am going to sleep I’m alone there and I start thinking I will cry. No one will see I am crying, but I am crying”.

In spite of Lillian grieving in private, it appears that those who may not personally know her or know of her loss will however identify her as a mourner by her sad countenance. She shared:

“Yes you’re crying, even the people they can see you still have something that worries you because you can’t be happy like all the people even someone who don’t know you can see you are affected by that”.

Apart from the public witnessing the sad countenance, it seems that the bereaved adheres to a specific customized dress code to display their state of mourning to the public. A widow apparently wears a special dress of a specific colour especially made for her. Lillian explained:

“Ja, they know they know, it’s from the dress, they make a special dress, especially when your husband dies they make the dress, maybe black or purple, we use black, purple and blue. If the first day you wear the dress, that dress you can’t wash it in the day and hang it there. When you go to sleep you wash it you hang it in the house. Tomorrow when we wake up we wear it you wear that for the whole year”.

This dress may not be washed in the day at all it has to be washed at night and worn again the next day. It also may not be sewn should it have a tear nor can a new dress be made for the widow. It appeared that even Lillian did not know the reason for this custom. She said:

“There...I can’t know why”

However, in spring there is a custom concerning the dress and the rain. It seems that when the spring rains commence, the bereaved is required to cease wearing the dress, regardless of the time span that may still be left of the spouses mourning period. Lillian stated:

“Yes, like now to the black people they say to the *roula* (grief) this time of the rain even if it is not yet a year you must take out the clothes before the rain starting. Only ‘*that*’ clothes because I told you another people they wear black all over, another people they wear blue all over, another people they wear the purple all over”.

When the bereaved removes the special dress from her wardrobe she must, however, still grieve in a dignified and respectful manner in order for the public to recognize her as a mourner. She said:

Again it seemed that Lillian was not too sure of the reason for this particular custom, although she speculated it may have something to do with ‘nature’. She simple said:

“I think in the nature..., I don’t know”.

It appears that when a woman experiences the loss of her husband, she is also expected to wear a scarf in a specific way to hide a part of her face and her shoulders, in order to indicate that she is in mourning. Lillian explained:

“Maybe someone can see you because they see us, you see when someone dies we wear... the scarf, we put it like this (demonstrates the wearing of the scarf) other people see how you wear, we can wear blue all over you can wear blue or black. It’s the same even if you wear black but like the shawl you wear the shawl to show the people, the actions you do must be like a type you see”.

If a woman has lost her husband, she is required to wear a scarf, in addition to her special dress, for an entire year to show the public she is in mourning. The scarf is worn in a certain way (over the head and ears) for the first six months and then for the six months thereafter the scarf is usually worn on the head. However, the widow will wear an additional scarf over the shoulders. She said:

“We can say after uh if like my husband has died up to 6 months we still wear the scarf like this (demonstrates the scarf position) after the six months, they turn..., only the scarf, they turn it the way we always wear”. You can take one of that colour black blue or purple, you put it there on your shoulders for about six months”

The scarf is still worn after the rain to publically display the widows mourning. She said:

“Yes only that dress and that colour because always that colour is only the people who have lost their husband”.

When Lillian lost her son, she wore a scarf around her shoulders for six months in a colour of her choice as a means of indicating her loss and her mourning publically. Since the traditional Africans do not generally wear a scarf around their shoulders, the act of wearing one signifies to the public one is mourning. She said:

“They know they can know because now I am loose (happy, having fun, etc.) but if they can see me starting to put something here”.

The scarf is worn in a certain way, so that the ears are kept closed. This custom is not only to publically show that the bereaved is in mourning, but it is worn over the ears to apparently prevent the bereaved from getting ‘sick’. Lillian said:

“They close, not the face like the Indian but we close too much things.... they say we must close the ears”. Because they said you can... find sick in the ears, so we close and then when the people they see like that they know, they know you have lost somebody”.

It is to be found that there are certain customs that a widower must also adhere to regarding death in order to display their loss publically. Once again, it seems that the customs must to be adhered since it could cause “sickness” for the bereaved if it is not conducted in the culturally appropriate manner. She said:

“They cut, uh, a piece of material, black, and they tie it on the left... yes, the left arm they tie on top of the shirt up to (indicates the top of the arm), and he wears a black, black hat, like this one (indicates a woollen type hat) to close his ears”

It appears that the bereaved does not just take time off from work, however compassionate leave would be taken the week before the funeral to mourn since that first week is crucial in regards to successfully grieving for a lost loved one. Thereafter the bereaved will return back to work and dress according to the appropriate dress code to publically display his or her mourning. She stated:

“No... no you don't take the time maybe they can give you maybe a week but after a week you wear that clothes and come with it to the job, maybe after at the job I can take out that hat and that thing and maybe put the overall on top of the dress and the time I'm going home I wear again”.

Another custom that an African bereaved woman must adhere to in public is to be *seated* exactly at 12 noon. It appears that this custom must be adhered to by all African women. She must also be back in her home before the sun sets. Lillian said:

“And then like afternoon they said it like I am out of the house, like going to town especially 12 o'clock, if the time is 5 to 12...I must sit down somewhere, I mustn't stand with my feet, I must sit down somewhere if up to the sun..., if the sun is middle i must sit down. And after maybe like quarter past I can stand up and go”.

According to Lillian, this is enforced by their law for “all black people” to abide to. It therefore seems to be customary since she also stated that it was “our culture” and because:

“They say the law says so. They said you will get sick”.

It appears that everything in the house, such as bedding and clothes, are thoroughly washed to sanctify the home again after the funeral procession. Culturally, the bereaved should also shave all their hair off to indicate that they are in mourning.

“Yes, they say after they are buried, maybe they buried Saturday and then the Sunday, Monday, or Sunday afternoon now they wash all the things in the house they wash all the clothes all the, maybe the people who were sleeping with me, we take everything and wash and then they cut the hair, everybody that was there cut their hair”.

However, according to Lillian, since she belongs to the ZCC church the custom of shaving one’s hair off is not reinforced by her culturally-defined laws. It therefore seems that her church and its guidelines have more weight with Lillian than the customary laws, since the church had decided that the choice was up to the bereaved. She said:

“Ja, there is the culture to shave but our church we don’t. Ja if you want to you can do, but they don’t force you.”

Thus shaving one’s hair was a matter of choice. It appeared that Lillian was not completely sure as to why the hair needed to be shaved. She did however indicate that it was a means of sanctification similar to the purification that occurred after the funeral once the mourners returned from the graveyard. She said:

“I don’t know why, they just say it take out the darkness in the family”.

It was apparent that ‘they’ seemed to refer to those who had determined the culturally appropriate laws concerning death and bereavement generations ago, which will be discussed in detail under the final theme.

There is no intense wailing or crying publically displayed besides at the graveyard. At the funeral, the mourners publically display their grief until the coffin is lowered into the ground; at which point it is considered to be “finished”. Thereafter the bereaved displays their grief by adhering to the customary dress codes and practices.

Determinants of bereavement

There were two distinct variables in Lillian’s story that determined her bereavement. The two variables have been added as subthemes and they are; *relationships* and *the mode of death*.

Relationships

It appeared that Lillian and her ex-husband, Joseph, still regarded each other with genuine love and affection, hence the reason she has been so deeply affected by his death. She said:

“I was very sad. Yes I still have feelings with him because our last words we talk to each other, he wanted to come home, come back home because he was not happy anymore there to this second wife”.

Lillian and her husband had discussed their relationship and it appeared that if he was prepared to change the behaviour that had led to their divorce initially, they could certainly reconcile. She recalled:

“I wanted to take him back if the things that made me go to be out from him, if he fixed them because there were problems that... force me to go from the house and seek another house with the children, now if he fix that things I can go back to him”.

The nature of the relationship seemed to be an important factor, and therefore had a bearing on Lillian's bereavement. Who the person was to the bereaved and how well she knew him seemed to be factors that determined Lillian's bereavement. She stated:

“From my mother or my father and my family in my house, I can cry up to the whole week but maybe to the uncle I can just cry after i hear he died I can cry. Up to the day maybe like he is coming in the house from the mortuary he's coming, we cry, tomorrow when we see him or today we see him we cry. The time the box is going down, there is the final crying of the people we cry and then it's finished and then we go home”.

Although the mourning period and nature of mourning for someone who is not too close to the bereaved is considerably shorter than that of someone who was close to the bereaved, it is clear that they still perform the same rituals and customs typical of their culture for the deceased.

Lillian's son was 20 years of age when he was killed 12 years ago. Throughout her story it was clear that she had indeed mourned her son in a culturally-appropriate manner. However,

since it was her son she had lost whom she deeply loved she still seemed very saddened by his death. She said:

“No. But like my son I’m still crying for him”.

The infant that she lost that was only month yet she mourned for her baby in a culturally appropriate manner. It appeared, however, that since she had only bonded for a month with her baby, it seemed that she had not yet formed as strong an attachment to him to grieve in the same way as for her 20-year-old son. She said:

“Yes, I cry lots but not like.... this big one. I can say we don’t know him very much. But this one the big one we already know, I can say just do this for me just do that, you see like that”.

Mode of death

It appeared that not only did the relationship between the deceased and bereaved determine bereavement but the mode of death had much bearing too. When Lillian’s son was killed in a freak accident, it shocked her to the very core of her entire being. She explained”

“He was somewhere working and the engine of the car just fell over him and he die immediately”.

It was therefore traumatic to lose her son in the shocking manner in which he died since it was unexpected and horrific.

Lillian and her family suspected foul play with her ex-husband’s death. It appears that they believed her ex-husband was poisoned by his new wife and the very thought of him being poisoned caused great distress for her and her loved ones. She said:

“Because if maybe she don’t know she if she knew the pain we feel in side she can pay the money to the Bafa and they must check what happening. We say she knows how he died, because if she feel pain like us she can ask them to check what happening”.

Support vs. No Support

Support or the lack thereof seemed a major factor for the bereaved and was highlighted much during her story telling. Support is given in different ways and is received from both many different sectors of the community as well as from the immediate family. From the day of the loss until the day of the funeral, the family of the bereaved and the elderly of the community stay with the bereaved day and night. Lillian stated:

“The same day he died, maybe there are people who can come sleep with you. I’m not sleeping alone. We are in one room we take out the bed, only the mattress. Because I can say maybe..., they think it will support you. Because they know you can cry, anything can happen... They sleep with you they old all old people they come they sleep with you here and then they bath you and maybe they can stay here with you maybe like the whole week”.

Generally “old people” have wisdom and knowledge and have experienced their own bereavements, and therefore know how to support a recently bereaved individual in terms of providing counselling as well as basic care-giving. However, it is not only the old people who can stay and support the bereaved.

It appears that the bereaved is in an intense state of mourning and for the bereaved to adequately grieve their loss, the above-mentioned support is therefore a necessity. The community and family are also culturally obliged to support the bereaved in the first seven days after the death. She said:

“Yes to support you, you see. Because the people always they make like this every day afternoon half past... from 6 o’clock up to half past, that time they sing and they pray and then it’s finished..., every day. Yes, you can say seven days, before Saturday they went to the funeral”.

Lillian’s family however did not appear to be supportive to her, and only provided some of the supportive functions. She said:

“But my family were coming just like that they will come maybe by 5pm they come they sit with me, the time they starting praying they went outside to pray with the people, when the people finish because always we are the people outside they make tea we make tea. We give them tea. When they go home, they go home and leave me alone”.

Since her family left her alone too, when the other supporters had left Lillian felt her immediate family did not offer her the support that she expected them to give. According to her, they are generally a close traditional family and hence she still cannot comprehend why they would have shirked their customary behaviour and duties. Lillian said:

“I don’t know, really I don’t know even like the first day I sleep alone. I think I will find the big support from the family, from this family but I didn’t find support. Because I think even the problem I was I was crying I didn’t find support the way I think because in my family from my mother... and us, the children and the grandchildren, my son it was the first in my family to die”.

Since her family did not support her in the manner she had hoped for the lack of support therefore seemed to have adversely affected her mourning for her son.

Evidently Lillian did raise the subject of her family’s lack of support to be an injustice to her, and had apparently reprimanded them for the lack of their support. She said:

“Yes, I am very close and I already tell them... this problem... even up to now I can still tell them. Yes, because they did wrong and then I told them... even something can happen not to me, to my other sisters, or my brother, they mustn’t do this, it’s wrong”.

Lillian did share her apparent embarrassment and disappointment with her family. Since support is a customary tradition she was especially embarrassed and disappointed concerning her mother’s uncaring behaviour and lack of support. She recalled:

“I just tell them it was wrong, I was not happy because the people when they come the black people when we hear that someone died, everyday there are people who are going ‘What is happening’, ‘Sorry, sorry’ up to the whole weekend. People will come from

far or from nearest, everyday there will come, people. But now, if the people come find me alone... what do they think? They find me alone. Me, I can't answer them there must be someone that I already talk to her in the family, she must be nearest me, we talk this thing then when people come, because another time the people they just come fill up the chairs, like me sitting here, the people come the people come too much and they asking what's happening. It's my mother who must tell them!"

Since her family did not give her the support they were culturally expected to provide, it therefore caused unnecessary distress during Lillian's bereavement of her son. It appeared that her chiding did however make a difference years later when her sister experienced the loss of her twins. She stated:

"But that time my mother... she was all the time there. No they realized they make wrong because I had already tell them. This is wrong. Because when people coming if they see me and me I see them I just point them on the eyes...I think about those things and I start to crying and how will I talk about those things. Now if my mother or my sister nearest to me tells them 'Ah, we lost... things was happening like this and like that'".

It seems that when the bereaved is mourning her loss, she should not be inconvenienced by having to relate her loss to anyone. It therefore is the task of the family to inform those wanting to convey their condolences to the bereaved. It appears her distress should be about her mourning and not about informing others of her loss.

Lillian's late ex-husband's family were a pillar of strength for Lillian when her ex-husband passed away and instead of going to his present wife's home as culturally expected they chose to fully support Lillian. It therefore indicated the close ties Joseph's family still had with Lillian. She said:

"Yes my ex-husband when he died i got support from the family from all the family and they were not to the house of Joseph (her husband) they didn't come there they were here".

Her ex-parents-in-law seemed to be available to counsel and advise one of her sons who was battling to come to terms with the loss of his father and of his inheritance. She recalled:

“Ja, but the family of their father was there to support us. Now they talk to him and he come alright”.

Support does not only come from the family members but rather it seems to come from all sectors of the community and even from people the bereaved hardly knows. She said

“Ja, even when you walk on the road you still find support”.

From the early hours of the morning and whilst the mourners are at the funeral, it appears that there are ladies from the community who especially cook food for the mourners. They all take to spring cleaning the home of the bereaved and prepare it for the crowds who are expected to arrive back for refreshments from the graveyard. This act of kindness displays the enormous support that the community offers the bereaved. Lillian explained:

“And then after we went to the funeral there, they must clean all the places, all the house they must clean to be clean and then, now there will be may be groups you know we have groups in our people, there’re groups like cooking they cook the pots outside for all the people. Now another people when they go (to the funeral), they already cooked from 5 o’clock early in the morning they started cooking. And the time the people come from the graveyard they find the food is already alright”.

Conclusion

Since Lillian’s perception of death is defined by her society’s cultural beliefs, her perception therefore of death appears to be a collective perception. The historical political arena of minority dominance in the apartheid era no doubted effected Lillian’s mourning procedures, since they were subjected to undignified measures when burying their dead. However, the majority dominant voice today is in favour of the indigenous African people, and thus Lillian’s mourning procedures are clearly conducted out of respect according to all her law-abiding customs. Grieving the loss of a loved one is customary and traditional. It appeared that many of Lillian’s customs and traditions of grieving were religiously underpinned

However these customary laws and traditions seem to dominate the subtle religious undertones and therefore it appeared that Lillian's story was more defined by customary practices rather than being religiously defined. Grieving is intense during the first week and is both a private and public. Thereafter grieving is private and only publically displayed through customary dress codes and practices. There is no doubt from Lillian's story that the support provided, regardless of the manner in which it is provided, has a direct bearing on the bereaved and her mourning process especially with regards to her son. It can therefore be concluded that the support provided facilitated the success of her grieving, and yet the lack thereof had hindered her mourning of her son to a certain degree.

CHAPTER 8

COMPARITIVE ANALYSIS

Introduction

Chapter 8 follows with a comparative analysis between the themes on death and bereavement that emerged from the narratives of the three participants and the literature. The similarities and differences of each theme will be discussed, and linked with previous research where relevant.

The following are the themes that occurred in at least two of the narratives:

- * Death perception and belief system
- * Mourning procedures and practices
- * Burial vs. Cremation
- * Bereavement behaviour
- * Public display of grief vs. Private display of grief
- * Determinants of bereavement
- * Support vs. No support
- * Socio-political context.

The Theme of Death perception and belief system

In Amanda's story, her perception of death seemed to stem from a character of levelheadedness and a constant exposure to death throughout her life. The more she was exposed to her loved ones dying, the more she said she became "immune" to death around her. Death in Amanda's family was not a prohibited topic, rather it was an acceptable, and even much discussed subject, and Amanda and her family witnessed death much in their lives and on their farm. Her exposure to various deaths and her ability to accept death appeared to have defused any fear of death. This seems to link up with the citing in Palgi & Abramovitch (1984) with regards to death. It was stated that if death was regarded as a prohibited subject it could evoke fear in an individual. Amanda came to understand and accept death; since death had laid its hand on so many of her loved ones. Amanda revealed a mature perception of death stating that it was a "circle of life". Since death was considered to be a "normal"

process to Amanda and was in fact regarded as inevitable, it therefore showed her natural acceptance and reality of death. Amanda's acceptance and understanding of the reality of death can be linked to Kubler-Ross's (1975) claim that the death of a loved one can be an opportunity to help one to grow. She claimed that when one has the courage to deal with death and accept it and to understand that death is part of life it can facilitate growth.

Amanda practiced Christianity as a religious belief but some of her ideas regarding the afterlife from a Christian point of view revealed an uncertainty in Christianity. Her uncertainty did not however negate her beliefs with regards to life after death; rather it revealed a lack of knowledge of her Christian belief system. She seemed to have believed that her husband's spirit had gone to a "good place" which may have been "heaven", which concurs with Powell (1981), and Parry and Ryan's (1995) assertions of the Christian faith. They posit that Christians believe that the body decays while the immortal spirit goes to an eternal destiny, Heaven. Although Amanda believed that death was not the end and that there was life after death, she was uncertain about her own fate. Her uncertainty disclosed a flexible and flimsy belief system regarding religion and therefore her perception of death may be personal rather than religious.

Amanda admitted that she had not really believed in ghosts or Animism that is until her late husband had passed away. She had dreamt of her husband for a few months and on many occasions she thought she had heard her husband speak to her. She did not have this particular experience with any of the other losses she had experienced. The study conducted by Rosenblatt et al (1976) on grief and mourning in 78 cultures revealed that believing in ghosts was universal; however, most people did not readily admit to believing in ghosts for fear of being labelled as irrational or being ridiculed. Rosenblatt et al (1976) seemed to think that ghost perceptions developed out of dreams since it seemed that the unconscious finds it difficult to eliminate the lost person from the survivor's dream world. Amanda admitted that although she felt sure she had heard his spirit speak to her, she could not be completely sure that he spoke to her and that perhaps it may well have been just a dream. Amanda had admitted she believed that one can have contact with the deceased spirit, but she vehemently denied a belief in mediums or sorcery or calling up the dead.

Sarah's perception of death stems from a deeply religious foundation. An Islamic belief is an absolute way of life for Sarah. It was cited in Parry and Ryan (1995. p.34) that "religion

solves the problem of death... religion alone gives hope because it holds open the dimension of the unknown and unknowable". Every aspect of death that is perceived by Sarah is defined by her religious beliefs and not by her own personal viewpoint. This can be linked to Haralambos's (1985) citing that religion helps to build maintain and legitimize a body of knowledge and that only religion can link meaning with ultimate reality (p.464). Growing up in a staunch Muslim home seemed to have instilled a deep cultural and religious observation regarding death. According to Hosking et al (2000), the Islamic faith has its own body of knowledge, which teaches Muslims that their fate is sealed from the beginning of creation. Sarah did not question the death of her loved ones, as it was regarded as disrespectful to question Allah, since according to Hosking et al (2002) and Parry and Ryan (1995), death is considered to be Allah's will. Sarah obediently accepted the death of her loved ones, even though she acknowledged that it was indeed difficult for her to accept death. Like Amanda, Sarah said she was not afraid of death; however, her lack of fear did not stem from a personal belief system or because death is not a prohibited subject, but rather because of her strong Islamic faith. If her faith was not strong she admitted that she would indeed fear death.

Kubler-Ross (1975) claims that the questions we explore through religion are usually those about rebirth, resurrection and the afterlife and Sarah's beliefs in the afterlife are based on her Islamic religion. Sarah believed that she was created for the hereafter and would receive wonderful rewards when she died. She readily anticipated going to the hereafter and meeting up with her creator. Research conducted by Hosking et al (2002) indicated that Muslims believe in life after death and that death was not considered the end, but merely a physical separation of the soul and the flesh. Sarah believed in a spirit world called Aalamè burzakh and said that all the dead souls depart there. Her belief links to the idea of Van Gennep's (1960) that the deceased depart from the world of the living and enter a symbolic world of the dead. The Islamic Muslim believes that the meeting of all the dead souls at Aalamè burzakh is a happy and festive occasion, since you get to meet loved ones and those you are acquainted with. This social affair of the souls coincides with the claims that Hertz's makes in Palgi & Abramovitch (1984) that death is indeed a social event that seems to initiate the individual into a social afterlife.

Sarah did not, however, believe in ghosts or spirits. She believed however that the living could pray from the Quran for the dead souls whilst they the dead were in the grave, and through these prayers rewards could be sent to the deceased. It seems that when the dead are

buried, the soul of the dead can venture back and forth from the place of the souls (burzakh) to the grave where it can receive rewards or punishment. According to Sarah, life in the grave can be “punishment” or if the souls receive rewards it can be “good”. Islamic Muslims do not believe one can have contact with the departed souls in any way and that contact will only be made after Judgment day when they all meet in paradise.

According to Sarah, Judgment day was a reality and that all would enter paradise. The study of Hosking et al (2000) found that Muslims believe they will be judged and held accountable in the life hereafter when the trumpets sound. Sarah believed that punishment in the grave was a reality, but considered it to be a passing phase until the hereafter. However, before the imperfect souls are able to enter paradise it seems that they will go to hell to be purged of their sins. If the dead can be purged they will enter paradise if not they stay in hell. Sarah’s views regarding purgatory can be linked to Parry and Ryan’s (1995) claims that Muslims believe good souls go to heaven, while the imperfect souls must purge themselves from their sin in purgatory.

Lillian’s perception of death is based on both her socially-constructed customary laws and her religious beliefs. Although death was also accepted as part of life and not to be questioned it was however seen as “an impure darkness” that could engulf and defile the survivors if they were not careful to practice certain practices. The consequences of disobeying the customary practices concerning the death of a loved one evoked a fear of death and the supernatural characteristics of death.

Many of Lillian’s customs concerning death seemed to be religiously underpinned. She is a member of Zion Christian Church and practices their denominational beliefs. Her beliefs concerning death are based on a combination of her faith in God and her traditional spiritual beliefs. Similarly to Amanda and Sarah, she believes in an afterlife and seemed to consider death to be a rite of passage since the soul leaves the body and passes on to the world of ancestors. Heaven and hell are vividly real to her ethnic group, and stories of the consequences of hell which is that there is no return from the ‘fire’ are emphatically talked about in their homes. She does not believe in the concept of purgatory, but believed that redemption is obtained whilst on earth. Lillian’s beliefs can be linked to Parry and Ryan (1995) work who noted that Christians believe the body returns to dust and that the immortal

spirit does indeed go to heaven since going to heaven is going home for the believing Christian.

The Tswana people believe in spirits and that they can have contact with the spirits. Lillian believed that the soul of the deceased continues its life as an ancestor and through their ancestors they are able to communicate with God. The idea that the spirit has an afterlife is similar to Sarah's belief of a spiritual social afterlife, and can be linked to the idea that "death is a social event and the starting point of a ceremonial process whereby the dead person becomes an ancestor" (Abramovitch & Palgi, 1984, p.388). The Tswana's idea that one's ancestors can positively or negatively affect the survivor's life can be linked to Mndende's (1997) research on the African Traditional Attitudes to death and dying. Mndende (1997) stated that if spirits were dissatisfied, it could have negative influences on the living. The Tswana people believed too that it is also possible to anger their ancestors and this belief connects to Bopape's (1995) study. Bopape's (1995) study of the Bapedi framework of Mourning and bereavement indicated that if a spirit is angered it could cause bodily harm to the living. Like Amanda, Lillian also had an encounter with the spirit of her late son and she said that she distinctly heard him call out to her to her (Rosenblatt, 1975). Although Lillian has a belief in Christianity and its teachings and practices, it has not altered her traditional spiritual beliefs and perceptions concerning death and the dead. Christianity seems to only serve as an extra belief system that supplements her cultural beliefs.

Within the three stories of death, each of the participants had experienced a loss of a youngster in their family which disputes the claim that death is *transposed*. Kastenbaum and Aisenberg 1976 (cited in Palgi & Abramovich, 1984) stated that death was usually equated with the aged and not with the young. However, Lillian had lost her son who was 20 years of age, Amanda lost her brother who was only 14-years-old and Sarah had lost a small nephew. There is more violence and crime in the world today (Kasiram & Partab, 2002) than when Kastenbaum and Aisenberg's 1976 (cited in Palgi & Abramovitch, 1984) made their claims, thus indicating that death does prevail and it strikes the old and young indiscriminately.

It appears that Amanda, Sarah and Lillian's perception of death have some similarities and differences. All professed to believe in the afterlife, although *what they believe about* the afterlife seems to depend upon their traditional culture and their individual viewpoints. The all showed no real fear of death, however once again their reasons were either individually or

religiously and culturally shaped. There were different beliefs regarding the soul or spirit of the deceased and where the souls departed to. All three participants believed in Judgment from a higher being however there were differences concerning the complexity of the Judgment. It appears that religion and culture and one's very own belief system can and does determine one's perceptions surrounding death.

Theme of Mourning procedures and practices

In this theme, Amanda's mourning procedures and practices concerning the body of the deceased came across as personal, and were not in fact cultural or customary. Although Amanda did not feel comfortable having physical contact with the deceased body, she however admitted it was therapeutic, especially for her daughter. Death, according to Kastenbaum and Aisenberg 1976 (cited in Palgi& Abramovitch, 1984), is considered *insulated*, implying that death was "the business of the specialist" (p.403). However with regards to Amanda's story it appears that this is not quite true, since Amanda had much contact with both the mortician and the body. Being integrally involved with the funeral arrangements was very important for Amanda, since it helped her "understand the loss better". This can be linked to Powell's (1981) claim that funerals do indeed help the bereaved to accept death and it appears to be therapeutic, both emotionally and spiritually. Rosenblatt et al (1976) also state that the act of disposing the body of a close loved one requires emotional psychological effort, which may indicate why Amanda regards the funeral procedure and practices as the second traumatic stage of grieving.

When Amanda was not in charge of the funeral arrangements, she had felt like an outsider. It seemed to have definitely hindered her grieving process, since she seemed to take longer to get over a death when she had no involvement in the funeral arrangements. The idea that grieving can be obstructed is conveyed by Eisenbruch's (1984b) in his work, who noted that each ethnic group develops its own practices and that if these practices are hampered it could disrupt the grieving process. The funerals and ceremonies that Amanda had arranged were the result of her personal choice and did not necessarily stem from a particular cultural belief. The church services of the funerals were simple and not drawn out and were conducted in a Christian-like manner, concurring with Rosenblatt et al (1976), who noted that Christianity seems to have no direct effect on death customs such as ceremonies (p.102).

Amanda felt uncomfortable at funeral ceremonies that induced a high emotional response, and it seemed that Amanda and her family preferred the funeral to be a simple affair and to be conducted as quickly as possible. Christian funeral services generally resemble a church service, which usually makes use of the opportunity for the minister to “reorient lives according to biblical patterns” (Parry & Ryan 1995, p. 39). There were no known customary rituals performed during the funerals that Amanda had organized. Anniversaries of birthdays and death and wedding anniversaries were remembered and commemorated, but no particular rituals or ceremonies were conducted on the anniversaries of these occasions.

The mourning procedures and practices of Sarah’s were considerable different to those of Amanda’s. It appeared that mourning procedures and practices were regarded as extremely important to Sarah, and the ceremonies and rituals performed were strictly performed and practiced according to her Islamic Muslim faith. In the case of Sarah’s bereavement, it appears that ceremonial and ritualized practices were determined by her religious customs. This harmonizes with research by Rosenblatt et al (1976) and Kasirim and Partab (2002), which indicated that tradition and culture determine the ritual and ceremonies to be performed. During the preparation for burial, the bodies of the deceased are bathed by the same sex and wrapped in shrouds. The body of the Muslims is regarded as sacred and treated as such. Men are wrapped with three pieces of shrouding and woman with five pieces to cover their breasts and hair. It seemed there was no preference given to the wealthy, and that all people are given a humble funeral.

It was evident that the customary ceremonial practices were rigidly followed according to her religious beliefs and these concur with Parry and Ryan (1995). It seemed that women and men have their own prescribed roles, which are dutifully followed throughout the funeral procedures and mourning practices. Sarah stated that the body, called the *mayjit*, is brought to the home and the mourners recite a special prayer for the deceased before the deceased is taken to the graveyard. The women stay at home and pray from the Quran continuously for the deceased, while the rest the congregation of mourners are at the graveyard. Praying and interceding for the deceased is vital for the mourners to perform, since it produces rewards for the deceased when the deceased is in the grave and the soul in Aalamè burzakh. Women do not generally attend the graveyard ceremony, but continue to pray for the deceased at home since the graveyard sermon is a solemn affair and wailing is not permitted.

Lillian's mourning procedures and practices like Sarah's are culturally and traditionally determined and are shaped by religious beliefs. Almost all of Lillian's mourning procedures or practices are encompassed with a ritual of some sort. From when the body arrives at the home of the bereaved to when the funeral has been concluded, various rituals and ceremonies are conducted concerning the body of the deceased and concerning the folklore about death. Since there is an admixture of culture and religion practiced within the Tswana ethnic group, the mourning procedures are performed from a religious and African spiritual belief system. A minister seems to be present for all the ceremonies; and prayer, singing and praising are conducted at these ceremonial rituals. Funerals are arranged by the bereaved and the family, and it seems that any decisions regarding the funeral are made collectively. The entire funeral procedure is a communal affair, and thus the community as a whole assists in whatever manner they can. These practices seem to correlate with some of the practices noted by Mndende (1997) and Bopape (1995) of the African traditional framework of death and mourning.

When the body of the deceased is in the home on the eve of the funeral, the bereaved have the opportunity to say their goodbyes whilst an all-night eulogy to the deceased takes place. This evening ritual could perhaps be considered the commencement of the 'funeral' and links up with Powell's (1981) claim that a funeral is a ritual of termination, a time to show respect and say good bye. The evening ritual consists of praying, singing praises and generally reminiscing about the life of the deceased with the minister, close family and friends. Another ceremony takes place again prior to the gathering at the graveyard at the home of the bereaved and then again at the graveyard. It seems that in Lillian's ethnic group there are three essential ceremonies conducted for the deceased, which were described in the previous chapter.

After the funeral, the mourners come back to the house and further rituals are conducted. The mourners are sprinkled with water by the minister and they wash their hands, body and feet to symbolize the purification of the person from death's tainting. Their hands are also washed for them to eat. A feast is provided to the mourners, whilst the bereaved remains indoors eating food specially prepared for her. Lillian considered herself to be a Christian convert, and stated that a Western outlook did not determine her particular ethnic group's mourning and mourning practices. However the very act of Christian type activities during the eulogy and funeral services implies a Western influence.

According to Parry and Ryan (1995), it appears that in all cultures the rituals performed during funerals and ceremonies can determine the gravity of grief. It was noted too that in societies where ceremonial rituals were performed almost immediately after the death, grief is not severely experienced (Parry and Ryan 1995). Amanda represented a Western/European framework, where they bury their dead as soon as the arrangements can be made and as “quickly as possible”. According to the Islamic Muslim, the burial together with the rituals are generally conducted on the same day as the death (Parry and Ryan, 1995). The Tswana people perform their funeral rituals a week after the death and always over the weekend, unless the lost loved one is a child. However, throughout in the week preceding the funeral, the bereaved is in an intense state of mourning and thus when the funeral is over, the mourning is considered to be “finished”. ‘Finished’ refers not just to the funeral procedure, but also to the intense bewailing and lamenting. In Lillian’s case it seemed that the customs that are attended to prior to the funeral rituals can contribute to the severity of grief.

A ritual of lighting a candle is typically performed at the graveyard at Easter time; however, this can be performed at any other time. The relevance at Easter is to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The survivors believe that the act of lighting the candle may assist the resurrection of the spirit of the deceased back to God.

The ceremonies conducted by all three of the participants served to acknowledge that the deceased is no longer with them; however, these ceremonies also serve additional purposes. With Sarah and Lillian, the ceremonies that were performed concerning had a deeper meaning and significance since they both believe that the soul of the deceased enters a world in which it has a ‘social’ life. It seems that the rite of passage of the death ceremonies must therefore be conducted rigidly according to their cultural and traditional customs since there are gifts, rewards, punishment and spiritual intercession at stake for both the deceased and the living. It seems that funerals, ceremonies and rituals are procedures that do indeed bring relief to the intensity of grief felt therefore each culture in each society should be allowed to acknowledge their own prescribed mourning practices.

The Theme of Burial vs. Cremation

According to Amanda, the mode of disposing of the body of the deceased was carried out through either a burial or a cremation. Both these approaches were accompanied by a church service of praying, singing and a short sermon. Whether one was buried or cremated was regarded as a personal choice and these wishes were generally carried out by the family members. Her brother, mother, father and grandparents were buried. Her husband and her aunt were cremated. Amanda had implied that she wanted to be cremated since burial had no relevance or significance to her. However her personal choice is contrary to her Christian faith since it seems that it is unbiblical to be cremated. The bible speaks about “till you return to the ground...., for dust thou art....and to dust you shall return” (Genesis, Chapter 3 verse 19, p.5). Her belief seems to indicate a personal choice, rather than a cultural or religious guideline. There was a constant aversion to the grave throughout Amanda’s story, and she insisted she did not want “to put into the ground”.

The ashes of Amanda’s husband were disposed of about six months after he was cremated. Many of her choices made during her mourning procedures were personal ones, and did not seem to be either culturally or religiously determined. However, the disposal of her husband’s ashes can be regarded as a final ceremony of saying goodbye. A special weekend was chosen to go away with her children to dispose of his ashes in the country where he grew up. This very act is a final ceremony, which Rosenblatt et al (1976) noted breaks the emotional ties one had with the deceased. It seems too at the final ceremony the bereaved becomes publically committed to finish with mourning (p.90). Burial and tombstones had no relevance to Amanda, and they did not reflect past ideologies. She had not erected a stone or visit her late mother’s grave in the 11 months that had passed since her death.

Burial practices in the Islamic Muslim society are conducted from a purely religious perspective. The graves are dug according to detailed specifications, and the dead are placed in the position so that the face of the dead faces Ka’abah at Mecca. The deceased are not placed in a coffin, but are placed directly in the ground with only the covering of the cloth separating the body from the earth. Planks are fitted next to each and over the body to cover the body. These practices performed according to Sarah are in line with those noted in Parry

and Ryan (1995). Once the body is covered the Iman recites the specific prayer for the deceased. There are not rituals surrounding the physical burial of the deceased but there are customary religious prayers recited.

Cremation is definitely not considered to be an option, since the body of the Muslim is regarded as sacred. The graveyard is also considered sacred. Whilst the soul wanders to the place of the souls (Aalamè barzakh), the body remains in the grave. Since the good are rewarded whilst in the graves thereby implying a social life burning, the deceased would work against the social life the deceased experiences.

Tombstones are not usually erected however a name plate may be placed on the grave in order to recognize the grave of a loved one. Muslims don't usually frequent the grave to visit the deceased, nor place flowers at the grave. Once the burial is over it is said to be "finished" and the deceased is prayed for everyday. Creepers or greenery are allowed to be planted on top of the grave of the deceased, since it was believed that plants could pray for the deceased and lighten the punishment in the grave.

Burials according to the Tswana people are conducted over the weekends. However if a child has passed away, they will bury the child in the middle of the week. The Tswana use coffins for their burials, which indicate a Western influence. It appears that the coffin of the deceased does not seem to be "doctored" as some African traditional ethnic groups practice (Bopape, 1995). It is preferred that the deceased is buried at the 'home' of the deceased. The 'home' does not necessarily mean the place of birth in this instance it signifies the last geographical home of the deceased.

Before 1994, burials of infants were conducted in the house of the bereaved parents. A grave was dug from the foundation in the house and the infant was laid in a home-made coffin and buried. Today, deaths of babies must be registered and the baby is buried in designated graveyards.

The Tswana people do not believe in cremation. Since religion permeates the aspects of their perceptions regarding death and mourning practices it seems likely that cremation may be prohibited because it is unbiblical. They believe too that if they burn the body, they would not be able to have contact with the ancestor at the grave. Since the ancestors are able to

intercede on behalf of the living to God and they receive counsel from their ancestors it seems important that the deceased is buried and not cremated.

From a modern, Western perspective it seems it is a matter of choice whether one is buried or cremated. The Islamic Muslim and the Tswana people follow their cultural and religious beliefs and dispose of their bodies by means of a burial.

The Theme of Bereavement Behaviour

The nature of grief as an emotional reaction to a loss and the symptoms thereof were noted in Amanda's story of her multiple losses. When various attachments that she had established in her life were permanently severed a range of emotional and physical reactions to these losses were thus experienced.

When Amanda experienced three losses over three consecutive days and another loss three months later, the response of *crying* to these losses were initially delayed since she wanted to be available to others who needed her. Only after the funeral of her mother did she begin to grieve for her mother however the emotional response of crying seemed to continually be suppressed. She remembered the *shock* she experienced especially when her 14-year-old brother was killed in an accident and years later when her husband had passed away from a heart attack. Since both of these deaths were unexpected they were, according to Amanda, the 'worst days of her life'. Shock is typically experienced in the first stage of grief according to Averill (1968) and Stroebe and Stroebe (19987). The common grief reaction of crying which was previously inhibited came to the fore when her aunt passed away unexpectedly. Amanda experienced much *sadness* during all her losses and said that one could be sad without crying. *Guilt* was not an emotion Amanda readily experienced, since it was equated with 'works not performed' and she had thought that she had done all she could with her loved ones before they had passed on. She did, however, experience a tinge of guilt when her late husband passed away, since she felt she should have forced him to go to a doctor. The emotional response of *anger* was frequently felt towards her late husband when he passed away because she said he knew he should have visited a doctor and thus he could have prevented his death. This reaction compares to Rosenblatt et al (1976) conceptual work on grief who stated that anger or aggression can be present. Stroebe and Stroebe (1987) claimed that anger is usually expressed towards the deceased spouse for having left the survivor.

Amanda seemed to have used these feeling of anger towards her husband as a means of coping with her grief. However, these feelings of anger were not felt for the other losses she had experienced. For her loved ones that were ill before they passed away, she said she felt a sense of *relief* since they had been suffering. Months after she had experienced her losses, Amanda felt fine, until something reminded her of her lost loved ones, when she *longed* for them and *missed* them. This evoked a sense of sadness. These reactions can be linked to Durand and Durand (1997) and Stroebe and Stroebe (1997) who allege that during the second phase of grief, the bereaved will yearn for the deceased and feel sense of sadness.

Amanda displayed typical *physical symptoms* of grief when she found herself automatically going to visit her mother on many occasions, only to realize that her mom was gone. She also tried to phone her aunt on numerous occasions and had to acknowledge that she too was gone. Although she did not dream of all those she had lost, she did *dream* of her late husband every night for a couple of weeks. In her dreams she would talk to him but he did not answer her. Her dreams became so real she believed she had spoken to his spirit since she felt his presence in such a real way. This is linked to Rosenblatt et al (1976), who noted that because memories of dreams seem to merge with memories of reality to the point where people blur the boundary between dream occurrences and reality occurrences when coming out of a dream and thus one can expect ghost cognitions. Amanda said she always felt ‘terrible’ after these dreams. The dreams provided her a sense of clarity regarding his business affairs, and when they had stopped she said that she was not sorry.

Although Amanda experienced grief reactions typical of grief phases recorded by many authors it was not determined when in her pattern of grieving these symptoms were experienced. She did however say that she thought in her opinion that there were three distinct phases, namely the actual death, the funeral, and the time after everyone had gone home and the bereaved was left on her own. The time period was not established except that Amanda thought one must get over the loss as quickly as possible. Since Amanda believed that death *is* inevitable and that “life must go on”; she came to accept her many losses in a very short period of time. According to Amanda, there was no demarcated style of grieving since it was a ‘personal’ and individual experience. She implied that her grief was her private and personal response to her losses. Klaas (1999) claimed that we should not assume the universality of specific types of feelings or assume that similar symptoms of emotion correspond to the same underlying feelings in different cultures (p.161). Given that Shweder

1994 and Barley 1997 (cited in Klaas, 1999, p.164) state that there are “no universal emotional concepts that can be matched across language and cultures”, Amanda’s emotional experience of grief can thus be regarded as private and personal.

Religion, culture and society delineated the behaviour of bereavement for the Islamic Muslim. The emotional response to death is controlled and executed according to Islamic principles and therefore the act of grieving seemed to be manipulated by the obligated need to obey Allah. *Crying*, the emotional reaction to a loss was clearly evident; however, it had to be performed in a very controlled manner. There is to be no screaming, shouting or wailing, rather a timid shedding of tears is requested for the bereaved to display. *Sadness* for the loss was also witnessed and permitted however it had to be controlled and suppressed too. *Shock* was experienced too, at the unexpectedness of the loss of Sarah’s mother-in-law. The emotional reactions of *guilt* and *anger* were not favourable and were not recommended, since they were regarded as ‘wrong’ emotions and as being disrespectful to Allah. The interpretation of one’s emotional arousal and one’s actual feelings of grief experienced seem to tally with Stroebe and Stroebe’s (1987) idea that people interpret their arousal and what they are feeling according to predetermined cultural and social norms. These social norms stipulate which emotions are appropriate for given social situations (p.30). According to Sarah, if one dared to experience reactions other than what is prescribed when mourning the loss of a loved one, one had to repent of this so-called sinful response and alter one’s ‘perspective’. Horcschild 1979 (cited in Stroebe & Sreobe, 1987) stated that when so-called deviant behaviour is not acceptable by a given society, individuals must control those emotions and bring them in line with what is socially expected. Her concept of *emotion work* is an attempt by the “individual to arouse the emotions they think they should feel in a given situation or to suppress emotions which they think are inappropriate” (p.31). It appears these ideas correlate with Sarah’s explanation of the Islamic faith of the arousal to a loss and that one seems to bring in line one’s emotions, so that they correspond to what will be culturally or religiously accepted. *Pining* and *restlessness* were symptoms that Sarah’s mother-in-law had experienced when her husband had passed away. *Dreaming* of the deceased was a general occurrence for the bereaved and signified that the bereaved needed to pray for the deceased rather than because the bereaved longed for the deceased.

There appears to be no well-defined stages of grief from the Islamic Muslim Perspective. The symptoms of grief do not seem to follow any specific pattern except that they have been

clearly demarcated by the Islamic Faith. The time period for grieving is incredible short and this may contribute for the lack of clearly-outlined stages. It appears that if an individual loses a loved one other than a husband the time set aside to grieve is only three days. The husband too grieves only three days for his wife, after which he is free to remarry. This period of grieving is a cultural and religious directive, and therefore it is strictly adhered to. The cultural obedience of grieving a loss for only three day may explain why emotions such as crying, wailing, anger and guilt are suppressed thereafter. This short time span for grieving that the Islamic Muslims practice goes against Van Gennep's (1960) notation that the length of the mourning period increases with the closeness of the social tie to the deceased. It also does not link up with Parkes and Weiss's (1992) research on widows and widowers in which they found that grieving for a lost loved one may take up to thirteen months.

The grieving time period for the loss of a husband is 130 days. This grieving time is called the iddat or waiting period. It appears that the bereaved widow 'sits' in her bereavement as an act of worship to her husband. It is considered her last service to her husband. The time span allocated to the widow to grieve signifies the godly adoration the Islamic women have for their husbands. Parry and Ryan (1995) added that if a widow was pregnant at the time of her husband's death her waiting period begins only after the birth of the baby. After the waiting period of 130 days has ended, she is allowed to remarry (p.65). The widow grieves for her husband in a modest and discreet manner.

Sarah stated that the loss must be accepted as the will of Allah and not questioned. It appeared that a weak Islamic faith would encourage the difficulty in accepting the loss unreservedly and it was stated that this could prompt the onset of depression in the individual. It was believed that by continually being aroused by certain emotional reactions the bereaved could become depressed since these emotions had the ability to control one's body and mind. Sarah said that the result of these emotional arousals could make one "sick". Parkes (1996) claimed that bereavement is a severe psychological stressor for the bereaved and can indeed trigger a series of psychiatric problems in people who are vulnerable. He stated that studies show 25% of common depressive disorders follow a loss of some sort (p.28). However, he claimed that bereaved people who were encouraged to express their grief and not inhibit them were less likely to suffer pathologic reactions. What appears to be a 'sickness' for the Islamic faith group may be considered normal grieving for another society and what may be regarded as an 'illness' for another society may appear to be normal grief for the Islamic

Muslim. Stroebe and Stroebe (1987) stated that grief reactions that deviated from the normal pattern and were connected with maladjustments were pathological (p.17). Lindemann 1944 (cited in Stroebe &Stroebe, 1987) offered the first general evidence that mental and physical illness could follow bereavement, but according to Stroebe and Stroebe, (1987) it is prolonged grief, delayed grief and inhibited grief that could be pathological.

Basic symptoms of grief were evidenced in Lillian's story and these symptoms ranged from many various aspects of emotional arousal to pronounced physiological reactions. The initial reaction to death especially an unexpected death was *shock*. Shock seemed to provoke physiological weakness in the bereaved and more so especially if the shocking news was conveyed without the presence of someone to comfort the bereaved. Shock was further exacerbated when the news was conveyed in a cold and uncaring manner. Lillian was alone and was left literally numb when she received the news her son had been in an accident. She stated that she had “no power” and was forced to “walk on her knees” to call for assistance. She also said she was in a state of disbelief too. These reactions coincide with the symptoms of grief according to Stroebe and Streobe (1987), and Parkes and Weiss (1983) who state that in the initial stage of grief, one experiences shock, numbness and disbelief.

Disbelief seemed to have only lasted for three days because when she had identified the body as her son's her disbelief had dissolved. Deaths that resulted because of an illness were expected, and therefore there would be considerably less disbelief. These were considered a collective response in the Tswana group of people. *Crying* was an emotional response that continued day and night right up to the day of the funeral, and was culturally expected as a means of mourning. Although the ‘intense’ mourning for the loss was considered “finished” once the funeral was over, the bereaved still cried and felt *sad* thereafter. Lillian had lost her son 12 years ago and yet she had stated in a voice full of emotion that she still *missed* her son. These grief reactions link up with the symptoms recorded in the findings of Rosenblatt et al (1976) and Park and Weiss (1992). They cited sadness yearning and crying as grief reactions common in bereaved individuals. It could not, however, be established whether these reactions were experienced in the specific stages that were noted by theses authors.

Lillian asserted that it was not common to display reactions of *anger* towards anyone or God for the cause of the loss since it was believed that death was unavoidable and expected. Anger was directed at others, only if there was any discrepancy suspected regarding the death

of the loved one and the Will. The impact of her loss caused Lillian's eating habits to change since she found herself continually in a state of weeping. The loss of her son also prompted Lillian to *dream* of him. The dreams seemed real as they had portrayed him just as he used to be before his death. Her sons also dreamt of their father when he passed away, substantiating claims in Rosenblatt et al's (1976) cross-cultural study that people are expected to dream of those who were close to them since the unconscious does not remove the individual from one's dream world just because the person had passed away from the physical world (p.55).

Apart for the first phase of grief that was evident, other phases were not definitely defined or firmly established from the Tswana's grief pattern. The time period for one to mourn the loss is one year for a spouse and six months for a child or family member. However there are further culturally specifications that determine this time period. The mourning period and particular mourning dress code comes to an abrupt end when the summer rains arrive at the end of September or the beginning of October. Thus it appeared that if one lost a spouse in the month of July the mourning period would only last two months. The first seven days of mourning appeared to be the most important. It is in this time period that the bereaved experiences the pain and sorrow of the loss by crying uncontrollably. The biblical seven day period of mourning can be linked to Bopape's (1997) work on the Bapedi people who noted that the source of the mourning period is a reflection of the admixture of Christian and African traditional religion which the bereaved follows (p.263).

It was established under this theme that various grief reactions were present in all three participants during their mourning process; however, not all the reactions were experienced by all three participants. It appeared that they all experienced shock, crying yearning and dreaming of the deceased. Other reactions such as anger and guilt were experienced by only one of the three. The time period was also either personally, culturally or religiously demarcated, and thus each participant grieved in the time span that best suited them or their community. It seems that the four tasks that Worden (1991) stipulated as the tasks of grieving could well be what the three participants tried to accomplish together with their culturally designated directives. That is, a) each one seems to have had worked towards accepting their loss, b) each participant has tried to experience their pain of grief in their own private and culturally defined manner, c) each one has tried to adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing and lastly they all seem to have withdrawn their emotional energy and had reinvested it in another relationship. According to Eisenbruch (1984b), it appears that

individuals have a tendency to justify suffering according to a socialized belief system and it seems that through this system that the suffering of grief is eased and the pain of the loss is restored (p.287). It would appear that all three participants have justified their personal suffering according to their own values and belief system and have eased their suffering of grief through what they themselves believe in.

The Theme of Public display of Grief vs. Private display of Grief

In the process of Amanda's grieving, it was clear that she had chosen to grieve privately for the loss of her lost loved ones since it was 'her business' and she did not wish for other people to see her crying. Public acknowledgement of her bereavement (mourning) at the funeral and services thereof was not evident. The only public display of her bereavement took the form of her wearing black to the funeral, a mourning dress code prescribed centuries ago. However, she stated that she had worn black to the funerals she had attended only because it was her choice of colour, rather than because it was prescribed. Amanda did not believe it was necessary to wear a specific dress code to indicate public mourning and cited no specific dress code for her and her family. This can be linked too, to Gorer's (1960) work on widows in Britain, who stated that the customary mourning dress codes and abstention from social activities seemed to have lost its relevance.

It was established that her first traumatic grief experience as a young woman evoked such an uncontrollable sobbing from her that it appears that a decision was made thereafter not to publically display her grief in that manner again. She had also made a decision that it was not appropriate to publically mourn since this seemed to create a spectacle of oneself. She had described displaying strong emotional reactions such as uncontrollable crying in public as a 'disaster'. Being in complete control of the mourning situation, and more importantly her emotional reactions, was essentially a decision she had made personally and was not a culturally-prescribed ordinance. However Aries 1974(cited in Eisenbruch, 1984a) stated that "what used to be appreciated is now hidden" in bereavement today and that society seems to "forbid the living to appear moved by the death of others" (p.319). Her decision made many years ago could well have been shaped by her societal culture. It would seem that when Amanda had publically displayed her emotional reaction to her brother's death it may have been frowned upon by the social community of that time and perhaps people may have hinted

that she had making a spectacle of herself. A definite reason was not established by Amanda why it was not appropriate to display one's mourning publically.

Amanda acknowledged the public display of mourning for other people but stated that it was not appropriate for her. She had acknowledged too that other people, societies and cultures could and did mourn publically at funerals. One can link this to Eisenbruch's (1984b) claim that even if one assumes that grief is universal or that the "meaning of life and death" is universal, he believes that one should not assume that grief is expressed publically in the same way by all people (p. 286).

According to Islamic culture, it was not appropriate for woman to display their mourning publically, especially at the funeral. As a result, most often woman did not attend the funeral of the deceased. The rituals of mourning practices at the grave could evoke grief reactions from woman who are considered 'soft', and therefore it is not recommend that woman participate in funeral rituals. It seemed that when woman are grieving they clap their hands, wail and scream, and these reactions to a loss were frowned upon since the graveyard affair was a solemn affair (Parry and Ryan 1995). Grieving for women was regarded as being a private and 'patient' affair. Rituals regarding the deceased were nonetheless still carried out, but they were conducted in an orderly fashion. Woman generally remained at home and prayed for the deceased.

It appears too that the Islamic Muslim remains at home during her waiting period for 130 days and that the community assists her regarding shopping and so forth. The legalities regarding the deceased are conducted at the home of the bereaved. The bereaved widow's mourning dress code is that of modesty. She is not allowed to wear loud colours or makeup or display any behaviour that could attract the glances of other men should she venture outdoors. Since grieving was only permitted for three days (except for the widow) the display of public mourning was only for three days. Seclusion for the widow lasts for only 130 days and thereafter she could re-enter society.

In the Tswana group of people, the rituals and ceremonies of the deceased person are a very important aspect of their public mourning and their private grieving. In the first seven days of the death the customary ordinances begin. Beds are removed and the approved mourners move in with the bereaved, and together they privately grieve the loss of the deceased. The

mourners staying with her assist her with regards to her hygiene and eating requirements and thus she is able to focus only on her grieving. This links up with Gorer (1965), who claimed that it was usually customary for the bereaved to abstain for a traditionally fixed period from social activities and from public distraction. However, every aspect of the first week's grieving is intertwined with cultural traditions and customs.

Eisenbruch (1984a) cited from Aries and stated that until the seventeenth century professional mourners were employed so that the bereaved could grieve their loss in private since it gave the bereaved an opportunity to really intensely grieve their loss. But by the twentieth century it appears that the display or the experience of grief was prohibited (pp.319). The Tswana people do not employ mourners however the seclusion of the bereaved affords the bereaved the opportunity to demonstrate their extreme grief. Private grieving occurs in the first seven days when the bereaved is confined to her home and grieving is conducted in privacy. Alternatively, the influence of the lack of public grieving in the twenty-first century is more clearly evident in Amanda's Westernized style of mourning.

The public mourning begins from the time of the death of the loved one. The bereaved adheres to a customary dress code to distinguish oneself from those in the community. The full customary dress code for the widow of various colours indicates 'deep mourning' whereas a scarf lightly placed over the shoulders indicates 'half mourning', which suggest the type of social life that is now acceptable for the widow. When the designated time for mourning is over, the particular dress code is discarded and a re-entry into society is recommended. The mourning of the deceased is a collective affair involving the whole community. A large feast is prepared for all the mourners at the home of the bereaved. There are certain beliefs and rites that are centred on nature and traditional customs which are practiced together with the public mourning dress code. Once the designated time of wearing of the specific clothing are over the bereaved still conducts oneself in a solemn and sober manner. These public mourning customs can be compared to those of Bopape's (1995) in her study of the African Bapede people who specify that dress codes are adhered to and carried out.

Sarah and Lillian's stories share some aspects, such as a modest dress code as a means of publically displaying one's mourning. In both stories, the bereaved widow had a designated time span to publically mourn her loss. Their dress code, social abstinence and time span for

mourning seemed to be shaped and defined by their own specific cultures. Amanda's public mourning, on the other hand, depicts a more typical Western perspective, where her decisions regarding mourning are her personal decisions.

Determinants of Bereavement

There is a combination of biopsychosocial factors that can determine the expression of grief. The most significant occasion for grief is the loss of a relationship. However it is not just the termination of the relationship but also the nature and security of the relationship that can determine grief (Weiss, 1985; Worden, 1983). The multiple losses that Amanda had experienced and the intensity of her grief was heightened by the loss of important figures in her life. For instance, the loss of her mother, her aunt her brother and her husband each had evoked an intensified grief, compared to the loss of her sister-in-law, mother-in-law and grandparents. This supports Worden (1983) and Weiss (1985), who state that the loss of a parent or spouse would be followed by years of grief. It seemed too that the length of one's marriage also determined one's grief. Amanda had stated that her children were adults and that she was financially independent when her husband had passed away. She believed that these two factors had most certainly assisted her in her grieving. Worden (1983) claimed that the security of the relationship does indeed determine one's grief.

Worden (1983) stated that historical antecedents could predict how a person will grieve. Looking at the multiple losses that Amanda had experienced, one can determine how future losses would be grieved. Amanda's previous grief pattern revealed that when she was not present at the death of a loved one and when she was unable to be completely in control of the funeral procedures, her grief had been intensified. Personality variables were also determinants in her grieving. She had indicated that although she came across as unemotional, her brother was in fact 'worse' than she was. It seemed that he displayed less emotion to the loss of his mother than she and her sister had, thus indicating there could be gender differences in grieving. He 'busied' himself with the legalities of the death. This supports the findings of research conducted by Rosenblatt et al (1976), which found gender differences in the reaction of death in various cultures.

Amanda's attitude to death and her strong character determined her ability to cope with the many losses she had experienced. Her coping ability mirrored the work conducted by Worden

(1983), Parkes and Weiss (1983), Kubler-Ross (1975) and Watson's (2004), which alleged that one's views on death, one's disposition and one's ability to handle stress all play pivotal roles in the grieving process. Amanda had admitted to being "strong" and she had portrayed a realistic approach to death. She said she could "handle that stuff" (death and loss) and this particular disposition certainly determined her grief.

The mode of death also seemed to determine Amada's bereavement. On many occasions she had mentioned that the sudden death of her aunt, her brother and her husband were more shocking and had impacted her grief more than those who had died naturally or from illness.

In Sarah's story it seemed that only the relationship between the husband and wife determined bereavement. That is, for the widow, honouring her husband and the act of worship to him and Allah determined her bereavement. Unlike in Amanda's bereavement, the bond of other relationships such as parents, children, siblings and others, and the nature thereof were not considered important factors in determining grief. Rather it seemed that the typical culture and religion of the Islamic Muslim determined bereavement and therefore the Muslim construal of the experience of grief appeared to determine how the bereaved would mourn.

Sarah admitted that the loss of her grandmother whom she had a very close relationship had affected her deeply, and that she still missed her very much since her passing 15 years ago. Although the experience of an emotion may depend on the construal of social situations (Rosenblatt, 1988), it seemed that Sarah's grief for her grandmother was more personally than culturally defined, and thus her feelings cannot be separated from who she is.

Sarah's asserted that the mode of death was in fact a determinant of bereavement and this compares with Worden's (1983) claims that deaths are categorized as being either natural, accident, suicidal and homicidal, and the type of death certainly determines the course of grief, and can in fact intensify grief. Sarah had said the mode of death had the ability to create "fear", and that an accidental or tragic death was difficult to accept. However, according to Sarah, one's faith in Islam enabled one to accept losses that were catastrophic. It appeared that death by illness was easier to accept since the person is not suffering anymore.

Lillian also believed that the mode of death did indeed determine bereavement. When her son was killed in a freak accident, the swift nature of his death shocked her to her very core. Her initial reaction of his death was shock and total disbelief indicating her state of numb denial. Her experience relates to Parkes and Weiss's (1983) claims that sudden death is shocking and can obstruct grief, since it evokes psychological defences that leaves the person quite helpless.

Since grief occurs in an environment of social relationships (Rosenblatt, 1988), the bond and nature of the relationship in Lillian's society also appeared to be an important factor in determining grief. It appeared that all relationships determined grief; however, according to Lillian, those relationships outside the immediate family were considered less likely to intensify grief. For example, the death of a distant family member evoked the response to grief for only a few days.

It appears that the particular habits and customs that these three participants have grown up with have been incorporated into their reality of death and bereavement. It is this reality of shared meaning within their own particular culture and society, together with the biopsychosocial variables that have determined their bereavement.

Support vs. No Support

Amanda's strong disposition and independent nature made it possible to be supportive to others who were mourning even in her time of bereavement. Throughout her many losses, she seemed to offer support to those who needed her. When her mother passed away she offered her sister and brother boundless support. She tended to be an "others centred" person, rather than selfish and she very seldom put herself first. Support in any form is vital to the bereaved and plays a role in the outcome of grief, according to Kasiram & Partab (2002). Amanda did receive support from her sister-in-law and a close friend who had subsequently also had multiple losses. It appeared that since her friend had experienced a similar encounter with loss, she was able to understand Amanda's loss and for that reason she accepted her friend's support. However, she stressed that she was generally not one to depend on others.

She had said that she was an independent person throughout her marriage too, and that when her husband had passed away she had continued to be self-sufficient in all matters. She prided herself for not having to rely on others and said it was her inner strength that enabled her not to have to depend on others.

The role of support is vital for the Islamic Muslim. Sarah seemed to also be available for support to those who were also grieving. Throughout her story she revealed her caring and kind nature towards others. Support during an illness or the dying process in the Muslim community is overwhelming. When Sarah's husband and his dying father were in Mecca, complete strangers had assisted with regards to transport, accommodation and meals. The assistance provided and support offered by both complete strangers as well as family reveals the close knit sense of community embedded in the Muslim culture that certainly acts as a buttress in a time of grieving and loss, (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987) noted that when bereaved people received a high level of social support fewer depressive symptoms and somatic complaints were experienced.

Support amongst the Muslim society is evident too during the 'waiting period' of the widow. In the 130 days of iddah the Muslim community rallies around the widow and assists the widow in every way possible. Since the widow must remain at home and conduct herself in a modest way the community will do any shopping for her. Support from the community is extended even to the professional field too, including in all legal matters concerning the Will and the estate, as well as doctor appointments and so forth. Sarah's mother in law had passed away eight days after her husband, but during those eight days she had reportedly been a pillar of strength to the other mourners reminding them that they must remain strong in their faith. Once again, this is an indication of the role support and the role religion plays in the Muslim community at a time of bereavement.

Support and the lack thereof played a vital role in Lillian's grief. Amongst the Tswana ethnic group, support is a key component to successful grieving. The moment the death occurs, people from the family and community come and stay with the bereaved in her home. They stay with the bereaved for the first week and assist her in all areas of her life. It appears they sleep with the bereaved, bathe her and feed her. The mourners arrive in the afternoon from 5 o'clock and sit with the bereaved and sing songs and praises and generally console and offer comfort to the bereaved. The comfort and support continues until after the funeral has ended.

The food prepared for the mourners attending the funeral is prepared by the community. Mourning is a communal affair, which means everybody in the community assists in any way they can to ease the grief of the bereaved. During the ceremony at the graveyard, women from the community come and help clean the house and prepare it for the mourners. When the funeral is over those supporting the bereaved in those seven days leave and people assist to wash bedding and clean the house. The bereaved is thus free to grieve her loss uninterrupted. Parkes (1996) noted that when bereaved people were supported in the initiation and termination of grief they were less likely to suffer from pathological reactions.

The family of the bereaved is expected to take time off and sit with the bereaved, to be the voice of bereaved. When people come and convey their condolences and inquire about the death, it is the duty of the family members to explain the nature of the death such as what happened and how it happened. When Lillian lost her son, her family, especially her mother, did not support her as custom required, and Lillian said she felt this had impacted her grief. Lillian had rebuked them for their lack of traditional support since it had impacted her grief. Subsequently, the customary support was available when another family member had experienced a loss at a later stage.

There is a huge difference between the Tswana people, the Islamic Muslim and Amanda regarding support. Amanda coped with her losses without much support and yet Lillian stated having no support from her family hampered her grieving. It appears that although culture and religion define what support is customary appropriate so too can individuals decide whether support is necessary or not.

Socio-political context

In Amanda's story of grief the theme of socio-political context was highlighted. For many years Amanda had taken her late mother to the graveyard to visit the graves of their various loved ones. Amanda had made it clear that she had no interest in going the grave except to dutifully assist her mother. Initially Amanda's mother had gone on her own to place fresh flowers on the graves of her brother, grandparents and father. However, since crime had increased and there were increased incidents of muggings reported over the last six/seven

years at the graveyards it became dangerous to frequent the graveyards alone, and thus Amanda had been forced to take her mother.

For many people visiting a graveyard with a family member this would have been a welcome gesture; however, for Amanda, who had a personal aversion to graves and graveyards, it was not pleasant. She believed it was futile visiting the grave, since there was “nothing” there therefore it became only a hindrance and a chore for her since she could not let her elderly mother venture to the graveyard alone. Amanda always took her pistol with and said that she kept an eye out to see whether anyone was ‘creeping’ about whilst her mother tended the graves. Since her mother’s death, she had not been back to visit the graves of her loved ones, nor had she erected a tombstone for her mother. She had indicated that when she did eventually go to the graves, she would be forced to take her sister-in-law with her, since it was not safe to go alone.

The socio-political situation and the resulting crime rate of the country had not impacted Amanda’s grief in any way, but it had affected her lifestyle. However, the lack of security of the graveyards and the underlying element of potential crimes being committed at the graveyards, rape, muggings and murders may impact others who would like to frequent the graves of their loved ones for comfort.

It appears that the past or present sociopolitical institution did not seem to have any bearing on Sarah’s mourning and funeral rituals. Directives and laws governing the Muslim community govern the experience of death and bereavement. The Muslim community seems to be a self-governing entity of religious customary laws and regulations that are strictly adhered to, regardless of what dominant grand narratives outside this entity commands. For example, obedience to Allah is far greater than obedience to dominant narratives. In their study on cultural differences of the death and dying in South Africa, Hoskings et al (2000, p. 439) compares with the above allegations, stating that:

“Within South Africa the patriarchal family lifestyle and Islamic framework of living have insulated Muslims from a Western way of life, and ‘past’ legislation of the apartheid era has strengthened this insulation from the broader social mores and rules of living”

This theme was named in Lillian's story too, since there were indications of socio-political undertones with regards to death and bereavement. The subthemes, political institution, social context and ethnic customs, were included under the umbrella theme of socio political context.

Lillian and her ethnic group were not compelled into a Westernized manner of grieving, rather they were allowed to grieve according to their ethnically-prescribed customs in the previous 'apartheid' government. It appeared that African traditional people do not behave "like the white people", which indicated that the dominant voice of the previous regime had not coerced their dominant viewpoints onto the less dominant groups like Lillian's.

Burials that were illegally conducted during the previous regime have been prohibited in the 'New South Africa'. It appeared that the African people did not register infants when they were born, and thus if they passed away the infants were automatically buried in the home of the deceased. There was no law prohibiting this particular practice, since those in power were unaware of these procedures. It is law today to register all births and deaths, and thus formal burials must be given to all who pass away. In this sense, there was an added cost to the family purchasing a coffin and so forth. Parkes and Weiss (1983) noted that a low socio-economic environment could be an added stressor financially, but that social class did not determine the way a person grieved. However, since the uplifting of the Traditional African people and the creation of jobs, the less fortunate are able to take out funeral policies which assist during the time of death. In the past regime it seems that the Tswana people (and perhaps many other African) used to make their own coffins out of whatever wood was available, today they can afford to purchase coffins for their loved ones and conduct burial services with self-respect and dignity.

Mourning and mourning practices have been strongly defined and shaped by the society in which Lillian grew up, which is in stark contrast to Amanda's upbringing regarding death and bereavement. Customs and laws governing death and bereavement have been socially constructed over the years in Lillian's ethnic group. Since death and grief is experienced as a communal event, those in the community accept the grieving customs that have been passed down from generation to generation. It seems that all the people in the Tswana community adhere to these customs and do not oppose these customary ordinances. It appeared that the dominant group in her society ascribed the rules, norms and traditions for death and

bereavement and this dominant group were considered the 'law'. Occasionally some of the group members may question the practices and customs regarding death and may perhaps even defy those dominant grand narratives. However, for those who dare to question or oppose the directives concerning the ordinances of funeral and mourning rituals, sickness or worse is apparently their fate.

Lillian's obedience to her ethnic cultural customs may be compared to Sarah's obedience to her staunch directives and ordinances. However, for Lillian the obedience is directed at the 'law' or grand narratives, whereas Sarah's obedience is directed at Allah. Comparing this to Amanda's beliefs, it seems that at some point in her life a shared reality was internalized regarding death and bereavement; however, she nonetheless chose to be autonomous, and has incorporated what works for her into her world of reality (Watson, 2004).

In the Tswana group of people (and other ethnic groups too), there are various beliefs and rituals concerning death and bereavement, which are centred on witchcraft and folklore. For instance, the washing of hands after the funeral is done to prepare for eating; however, it is also performed to wash away the impurity of 'death'. Adhering to many of the rituals prescribed is important since there is a strong belief in the ancestral world.

Folklore stories are passed down from generation to generation and is firmly acknowledged and believed. Bopape (1995) stated that witchcraft is part of African tradition and that to the Bapedi people witchcraft is 'an urgent reality'. Lillian confirms this reality by saying that her ethnic group practice and believe in witchcraft too. There is a strong belief in the potency of various concoctions of herbs and tea medicines (*muti*), which have the power to harm or kill an individual. Bopape (1995) states that the question of the methods and techniques of witchcraft may confound one, however, there is enough evidence and experience to know the facts of the situation. According to Beuster, (1997) 'culture specific syndrome' states do occur and need to be understood. The Tswana belief of spirit possession and *muti* killing should therefore not be taken lightly.

Conclusion

The themes highlighted in this chapter were those which the researcher had identified during her analysis. The lens of the researcher served to reveal themes of death and bereavement,

and thus the themes discussed above may be different from the lens of another researcher. The comparative analysis between the recurring themes and the literature revealed many consistencies between previous research and the narratives. These narratives are not considered to be the absolute truth rather they are the participants' own personal and unique stories. There were many similarities found in each of the stories, such as certain emotional responses of shock, crying and sadness. There were differences too, regarding their perceptions of death, their private and public mourning and their funeral practices. The themes that seemed to have provided rich and meaningful material were the mourning procedures and practices of each participant, their individual bereavement behaviour, the private and public display of grief and the socio-political context. The study established that tradition and culture do determine the ceremonies and rituals that must be performed, and that not all mourning practices are unified (Eisenbruch, 1984b). It seems that each participant and each ethnic group have certainly developed practices that best meet their needs at the time of death. It appears that Sarah and Lillian have both chosen to identify with their own behavioural ethnicity in their time of loss and bereavement (Eisenbruch, 1984a) however Amanda has incorporated her own personal belief system to accept death and understand her loss.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Focus on the journey not the destination, joy is found not in finishing an activity but in doing it

Greg Anderson

Introduction

The study will be evaluated in light of the strengths and limitations of the study. Areas of the study which may be of value or may perhaps open avenues for clinical practice and future research highlighted.

Evaluating this study

It was the researcher's aim to allow three culturally-diverse bereaved individuals to narrate their story on death and bereavement. It was hoped that by allowing the three participants to tell their own unique and personal stories, through the use of unstructured, in-depth interviews, rich and meaningful information would come to the fore. The researcher had personally experienced the phenomena of death and bereavement and had wondered how the loss of a significant other had affected other individuals. The researcher showed concern and curiosity as to whether all South Africans had the liberty to grieve and conduct mourning practices in their own culturally-appropriate manner, given that during the past Apartheid era, many black South Africans were misdiagnosed by medical professionals due to a lack of cultural knowledge. The researcher hoped that the narratives of the participants would reveal whether a Western perspective to grieving that seemed so dominant in past apartheid had influenced their grieving. She had hoped too that by allowing three participants, two of which were from non-Western cultures, to tell their stories an alternative reality and a new

understanding about death and bereavement would emerge. The researcher believes that the aim of her study was therefore accomplished.

The recurring themes that had emerged in the narratives were discussed. The researcher comparatively analyzed the recurring themes and linked them up with literature and previous research. A Western perspective on death and bereavement did not influence the non-Western cultural grieving and mourning practice in this study, and the information thus elicited from these cultures is of significant value and importance.

Strengths of this study

This study provided an opportunity to three culturally-diverse South African women to tell their unique and personal stories of their loss and grief. These personal stories expressed the beliefs, values, language and behavioural norms of each participant thereby exposing the foundation of the particular interaction within their group. The studies on death and bereavement conducted on both non-Western and Western cultures have conceptualized grief, and have suggested what certain differences and similarities between cultures in their findings are likely to be. By contrast, this study did not try to generalize its findings or determine whether grief is universal or not; rather it aimed at letting the experts (the participants) reveal *their* expertise on death and bereavement so that there may be a better understanding of the possibility that all people grieve differently.

The Social Constructionist approach of this study allowed the researcher to socially co-construct a reality between her and the participants. The researcher was able to explore, question and understand the changing stories and self-descriptions of the participants varying experience of death and bereavement. The nature of this approach also allowed the researcher to establish meaning and understanding of how certain impressions and viewpoints developed within the three different social communities.

The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to record the unique personal stories, without having to quantify results typical of a modernistic approach. This approach focused on the inner subjective meaning and experiences of each participant and thus allowed the researcher to bring to the fore an understanding of death and bereavement within its context. The researcher was able to explain the study to the participants and disclose information without

having to deceive the participants in any way. The participants knew that the research was to record their personal story and that at any given time they could withhold any information that may have appeared too sensitive to divulge.

The researcher believes that *validity* from a qualitative point of view was achieved in this present study. Since validity in qualitative research refers to the “trustworthiness” of the report (Golashani, 2003, p.603) the researcher believes that the participants’ revelation of the truth of their experience and the reality was indeed trustworthy and is therefore valid (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). *Trustworthiness* establishes confidence in findings (Golashani, 2003), and the researcher did try to discover the truth regarding the personal stories of the participant’s experience of loss and bereavement. In qualitative research, it is important that the study also has *credibility* (Golafshani, 2003, p.601; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). The researcher believes that the account each participant provided regarding their experiences of death and bereavement were indeed their truths, hence the present study may be considered a credible one.

The reliability of a qualitative study refers to the trustworthiness and dependability of the observed information (Golafshani, 2003). From a positivist perspective, it is important for observations to be conducted and measured in an objective and scientific way, hence discoveries would be value free since it is believed that the world is believed to be stable and unchanging (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). In quantitative research, if the same results are achieved in repeated replications the study is therefore deemed reliable. Researchers conducting a study from a Social Constructionist approach, however, observe a changing reality and do not necessarily expect to find the same results if the study is repeated.

Dependability is an important feature of qualitative research, since it strongly corresponds to the notion of *reliability*. This study is regarded as reliable, since the personal accounts of three people who were constructed as bereaved are regarded dependable sources. The dependability of a study can be achieved through “rich and detailed descriptions that show how certain actions and opinions are rooted in and developed out of contextual interaction” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006 p.64). The researcher took into account the context in which death and bereavement occurred in each of the participants’ stories, and believes that dependability was achieved through her interpretations of the rich and detailed descriptions. The researcher’s pre-existing sense of the death and bereavement may have influenced her

construction and interpretation of her material however she approached her analysis with this in mind, and made constant acknowledgment of this to the reader throughout the study.

Limitations of this study

The researcher acknowledges that her pre existing ideas on death and bereavement may have somewhat influenced and coloured her interpretation of her material provided by the three participants. In the process of constructing and reconstructing the material, the researcher remained aware of how her preconceived ideas and assumptions about herself, her participants and her research had affected her presentation of this study. During the interviews with each participant, the researcher was aware that her manner of speaking and her participant's responses would add to the construction and reconstruction of each participant's reality. She further acknowledges that her own ideas and assumptions coloured the coding and elaboration of each theme depicted, and therefore coloured the final outcome of her interpretation. She realizes that her interpretation is not to be considered an absolute truth on death and bereavement of the participants' cultures, and that another researcher may have analyzed and interpreted the material differently.

Since the study only used three participants from the Limpopo province, the findings therefore may not be generalized to the population as a whole. However, the study was not aimed at making a generalization rather it was aimed at eliciting rich and valuable personal accounts of the experience of loss and the consequences thereof from three case studies of bereaved people. This study was aimed at providing three people the opportunity to give meaning to their own unique story of death and bereavement. The research was also aimed at producing a new understanding to the concepts of death and bereavement.

The nature of the study was a sensitive one, which could have sparked some ethical concerns. However, the researcher was aware that speaking about a significant loss and the affects thereof could well evoke emotional responses from the participants. The researcher did take into consideration the sensitivity of the study. Each participant was informed that at any given time if they felt uncomfortable in any way, the interview could be terminated with the participant suffering no consequences as a result of withdrawing. Additionally, the researcher made it clear that the participants were not obligated to share any information that was

regarded as being too private (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). During the interviews, the researcher remained ethically professional and used her good judgment regarding highly emotional situations. The participants were made to feel safe and the interview was conducted in a manner that allowed for privacy. Since the participants did not display any visible symptoms of depression a referral to a counsellor or psychologist was not deemed necessary.

Before the research was conducted the researcher had given the participants the assurance of confidentiality (Becvar & Becvar, 2006; Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996), and stated that they would remain anonymous, the researcher therefore used pseudonyms and thus changed the names and places when discussing the participant's stories. In evaluating the study the researcher believes that she had not ethically stepped out of line. The researcher believes that she remained ethically true to the purpose of this study by giving three participants an opportunity to tell their unique stories in a safe and protected environment and construct their own reality.

Focus in Clinical Practice and Future Research

In clinical practice

The research study revealed that perceptions of death, mourning and mourning practices were shaped and defined by one's culture and religion. It further revealed that bereavement is substantially shaped by cultural context. In trying to help bereaved people in South Africa work through their grief and function better, clinical professionals should acknowledge the possibility that grief does not follow the same universal pattern for all individuals. Although ethnic backgrounds have allowed for differences in bereavement, people in the medical field need to recognize and understand these ethnic differences and acknowledge that individuals all may grieve differently from each other. Mental health professionals may ascribe meanings to the bereaved in therapy that may make sense to the clinician, but may not make sense to the bereaved and are thus irrelevant and unhelpful for their grieving process.

It is further possible that the standards of grieving that professionals sanction and support could be too discordant with what commonly occurs in the various cultural grieving processes (Rosenblatt, 1988). The Western definition of 'normal grieving' seems to be

discordant with the cultural grieving prescriptions of the three participants in the study. Therefore, to use the Western definition as a guideline in the professional field could set off bereaved people to question their psychological wellbeing and this could be an added burden to the bereaved in their time of grieving. In the study, what appeared as atypical grief in one culture was in fact considered to be typical for another culture, therefore it would serve the clinician well to know and understand what a typical grief is in each particular ethnic group. This will help the clinician to know whether the bereaved from an unfamiliar culture is suffering from pathological grief or not, as defined by *their* cultural beliefs, customs and practices.

Since some ethnic groups do experience ‘cultural specific syndromes’ and have what may seem like an unbelievable belief system in witchcraft and folklore, clinicians should also acknowledge these beliefs. It is possible that the bereaved may fear for their sanity if they can so easily be misdiagnosed because of a misunderstanding or the lack of knowledge on cultural and ethical circumstances and belief systems. Such a diagnosis may also serve to hamper healing, and thus protract the grief process.

In future research

This research could be used as a platform from which further studies on cultural variations on death and bereavement could be undertaken. Since the study revealed differences in the comparative analysis in some of the themes of the study, it is hoped that each theme in itself would open the avenue for further research.

There are many other diverse cultural groups in South Africa whose perceptions of death and mourning practices and grieving have not been researched. This study showed that the three participants did not share the same perceptions of death. These perceptions appeared to be defined by their religion as well as their cultural customs and perhaps to explore various religious views regarding death may offer further enlightenment.

The participants did not equally share the same private experience of grief, nor did they share the same public expression of their grief. The public and private expressions of grief seemed to be culturally, religiously and individually determined. Future research could perhaps focus

on the way in which certain groups reconcile the pain of their loss and not on whether grieving had been accomplished and the correct patterns, stages and time spans had been adhered to.

Since South Africa has so many varied ethnic groups who earnestly believe in witchcraft and folklore, how these beliefs have evolved and continue to be a large part of a belief system may be an area for future research too. The study of various cultural specific syndromes and the symptoms thereof may too be beneficial and could provide relevant information on bereavement practices and rituals. It appeared that an admixture of Christian and African tradition is practiced in non-Western cultures at a time of death. Future study could explore how Western religious belief systems have been incorporated into a non-western culture's mourning practices and how it seems to have no relevance in the actual mourning.

Conclusion

The study did produce valuable and rich information of the unique personal accounts of death and bereavement. From the three accounts, it was established that the questions people ask about death such as 'Is death the end or is there life hereafter', may be shaped and defined by one's personal beliefs one's culture and religion. It was established that the loss of a loved one makes us aware of our own vulnerability, but it can facilitate our personal growth. It was also established that mourning practices and procedures were important for the bereaved, and that these practices and procedures were indeed necessary and therapeutic for grieving for all three of the participants.

There were similarities and differences between the participants in their reaction to death. In all three accounts of grieving, crying and sadness were two responses evident throughout their grieving. In two of the participant's cultural customs, values and norms determined their private experience of grief and their public display of mourning. It seemed that in societies in which a patriarch family lifestyle exists, a staunch dictatorship governs specified prescriptions to grieving which are strictly adhered to. However, for the bereaved person who may be self-directed and has little or no relation to a specific culture or religion, the experience of grieving and public mourning is independently determined.

As societies evolve and change, so too do funeral rituals and mourning practices evolve and change of those societies. It was noted that the socio-political context had a positive bearing on death and grieving for the majority of South Africans. This study is just the tip of the iceberg with regards to death and bereavement in diverse cultures in South Africa. A quantitative study with a more structured questionnaire will serve to elicit conceptual information of death perceptions and grieving in this country. Alternatively, further qualitative studies similar in the nature to this present study may elicit additional rich and valuable information on cultural variations on death and bereavement. It seems apt to conclude with a quote from Klaas (1999, p173):

“We not only need to accept that other people may see things differently. We also need to accept that the way they see their world and even the way they see us, may be useful in seeing ourselves more clearly. The ‘we’ that knows death can be as multi-cultural as the ‘others’ we seek to serve”.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF CONSENT

I ----- hereby give consent to take part in an in-depth inquiry in the research study conducted by Denise Appel on death and bereavement, and acknowledge that I am a willing participant. I have been assured that the information collected will be kept confidential and that I will remain anonymous during the study and thereafter.

Signed on the ----- of ----- 2011 at -----
