THE LANGUAGES OF GRIEVING:

SILENCE, TALK AND

METAPHOR

By

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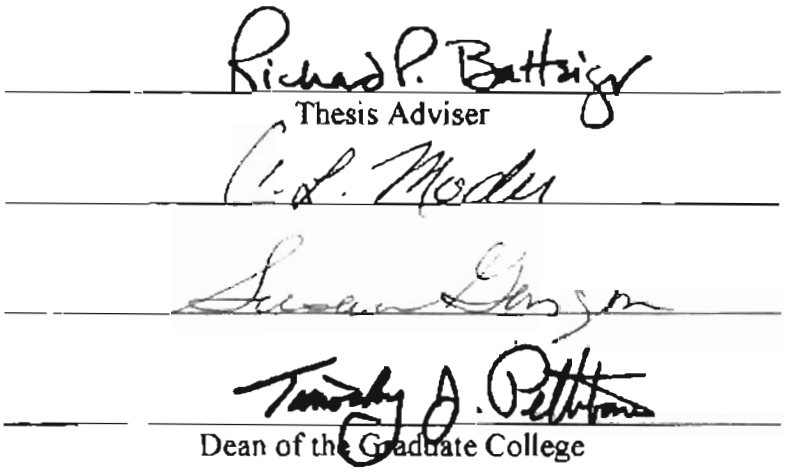

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PREFACE

This study looks at several characteristics of language used by people who are grieving. Two different sets of interviews were conducted. During the first interviews, twenty-six subjects were asked questions to discover whether they preferred speech or silence in times of experiencing grief. Later, thirteen of those subjects were interviewed a second time and the transcripts of their first interviews were inspected again, this time looking for what metaphors they used to talk about grief. (One additional subject, not included in the first interviews, participated in the second interviews.) The results of the study provide a picture of the language of grieving among this group of white, middle-class Mid-westerners.

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Introduction

Grieving is one of the most common, and yet one of the most profound, of human emotions. We grieve because we love, because love does not last forever, because those we love are mortal, because we are mortal ourselves. We grieve at the loss of what is important to us, most especially the loss of someone we care for. And, because we are human, and linguistic creatures, we communicate our grief, and communicate about our grief, in the structures of language.

This study looks at two aspects of the language of grieving: silence vs. speech, and metaphor. Knowing that some cultures have and do consider silence to be an appropriate or even necessary response to grief, silence both on the part of the griever and on the part of those in the griever's presence, I began the research with questions about silence: "Do white, middle-class Midwesterners need speech or silence or both when they are grieving?" and "If the need for silence exists in this group, does mainstream American culture provide a way for that need to be met?" I found that the majority of those I interviewed needed both speech and silence in their own times of grieving. The interview data further indicated that the subjects had a high regard for the individuality of grieving, and were inclined, when in the presence of a grieving person, to take their cue for speech or silence from that person. An unexpected finding was that, though the subjects did discuss speech and silence as asked to in the interviews, many of them also took the opportunity to tell, unprompted and sometimes at length, the stories of their own grieving experiences, or to talk about some other grief issue unrelated to the question of speech or silence but evidently of significance to the subject.

This clear need for talk about grieving led to the second set of research questions and to a second set of interviews. When people do talk about grieving, I wondered, how do they talk about it? What does a close look at the language they use reveal? Lakoff and Johnson (1980 and 1999), and others, have postulated that most of our language about abstract experiences and emotions, such as grief, is metaphorical. So I began this part of the study looking for metaphors in the transcripts of the first set of interviews, and then conducted a second set of interviews in which I asked questions designed to elicit metaphors. As expected, the grief talk was full of metaphors, and they could be classified according to Lakoff and Johnson's schemata for conceptual, conventional metaphors and for novel or image metaphors.

As language users, then, we may choose to communicate about grief through silence, through the absence of speech. In some cases our silence may signify our discomfort with the topic and emotions of grieving; we may simply not know what to say. In other situations silence may show our respect for the ones who grieve or our acknowledgement of their altered state. At other times our silence may be born of our intimacy with the ones who grieve, the deep silence of communication that is beyond words. When we are the ones who are grieving, we may choose to be in silence, to take time out from speech and be "unto ourselves." We may choose to talk about grief, and, when we do, we are likely to do much of that talk through metaphor, using the concrete and physical to represent the abstract, the emotions of grieving that can not otherwise be spoken of.

Grieving has a language, and it is multiform.

Grieving is certainly a universal experience, a human response to loss. How we grieve, however, and when and with what manifestations, is dependent on the culture we are a part of and the ways that culture has structured its rituals or customs or accepted activities in response to grief. Rosenblatt, Walsh and Jackson (1976) distinguish between grief, which they define as the "sorrow, mental distress, emotional agitation, sadness, suffering and related feeling caused by death," and mourning, the "culturally defined acts that are usually performed when a death occurs" (p. 2). Grief, then, could be seen as a universal experience, and mourning as culturally formed responses to the human experience of grieving.

In some cultures, silence seems to be, or to have been, one accepted form of mourning, either on the part of the bereaved person or those responding to the bereaved person. In the biblical story of Job, for example, which most likely came out of the Semitic cultures in the ancient Middle East, Job, having lost all of his children, his servants, and his livestock, sat mourning in ashes. Three of his friends learned of his plight and came to see him. We are told that, when they saw him, they "raised their voices and wept aloud," then tore their robes, threw dust on their heads, and "sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great" (NRSV Bible, 2:12-13). After the seven days, Job finally spoke. It seems, then, that, in this particular culture, silence, even an extended silence, was considered an appropriate way of mourning.

Similarly, Orthodox Jewish custom even today expects that, during the period of Shiva, the first seven days after a burial, the time of severe mourning, the bereaved will not answer the phone or the door, greet others, or, after the first three days, respond to greetings (Klein, 1979, p. 261). The Talmud instructs believers that they should "not comfort a person when his dead lies before him. . . .After the funeral, when he becomes aware of his loss, he is open to consolation" (Klein, p. 286). Steven Moss, in discussing grief work and Judaism, says:

> As Judaism recognizes that the person touched by the experience of death, which is anti-life, becomes less of a human being in his relationship to his fellow man, the period of Shiva is marked by various customs by which the mourner breaks his ties with the living around him. (Klein, p. 172)

Silence, then, is very much a part of Orthodox Jewish mourning, silence both on the part of the bereaved and in response to the bereaved.

The same could be said for the Western Apache of east-central Arizona. Basso (1990) reports that one of the situations in which the Apache believe that "it is right to give up on words" (p. 307) is "being with people who are sad" (p. 312). When an Apache finds herself or himself in the presence of someone whose kin has recently died, verbal communication is discouraged. Basso's informants gave him three reasons for this silence: 1) because speaking requires an unusual amount of physical effort for those who are burdened with grief, 2) because talking would only make the grieving person sadder, and 3) because intense grief may cause personality changes and therefore talk could incite hostility or even violence (pp. 312-313). As evidence of the latter, they cited

"numerous instances in which the emotional strain of dealing with death coupled with an overwhelming sense of irrevocable personal loss, has caused persons who were formerly mild and even-tempered to become abusive, hostile, and physically violent" (p. 313).

Among the Igbo of Nigeria (Nwoye, 1985), there is the belief that if someone dies "prematurely," the grief caused by their death would be so great that any verbal reference to the death would only add to their loved ones' distress. Therefore, visitors stay away from the bereaved until about four days after the death. Then, when they do visit,

> Sympathizers walk in, go straight to the bereaved, stand before them for a short time, then find a seat somewhere among some other mourners and join them awhile in mutual silence. When they feel they have stayed long enough, they again approach the bereaved, repeat the process of showing themselves to them, and take their leave as silently as they came in. Although no word has been spoken, quite a bit has been communicated. They have shown by their physical presence that they sympathize with the bereaved and share in the loss of their beloved. (Nwoye, p. 186)

Additional reasons Nwoye lists for this behavior are the necessity of absolving oneself from suspicion of having something to do with the individual's death by visiting in person, and the belief that, since everyone knows what happened, it would be superfluous to talk about it (p. 186).

So there is evidence that a number of cultures have recognized silence as an appropriate mourning response, perhaps in part out of respect for the grief of the bereaved, perhaps in recognition that that sorrow connected with grieving is a sorrow beyond words, and also,

as we have seen, out of a belief that those who grieve may react to others in out-of-the-ordinary and even dangerous ways.

One of the possible reactions of the griever is anger. Rosenblatt, Walsh and Jackson (1976) discuss anger as one of the grief responses that could be acted out as aggression and therefore become a danger to the bereaved or those around them. They have found that cultures usually have one of two adaptive options for handling anger in response to grief. One option is suppression with the help of a ritual specialist, who provides normatively correct activities that fill time and minimize frustration for the bereaved. In some cultures this would be a shaman or healer and the activities might be singing, praying, or dancing. They consider this function to be filled in much of mainstream American culture by funeral directors or ministers. The second option is channeling the anger to institutionalized targets (self, outgroup members, inanimate objects, the presumed killer of the deceased), and this is limited in most cultures which use this option by marking or isolating the bereaved (pp. 34-39).

That this perception of the bereaved person as someone others might need to be cautious around is part of mainstream American culture is evident in contemporary grief literature. We are told that "The bereaved person frequently behaves in an unexpected manner" (Schoenberg , 1980, p. 240), and that "It is important to realize that grief has the characteristics of a neurosis, and that bereaved may well show such symptoms and suffer feelings out of the ordinary" (Kutscher and Kutscher, 1969, p. 5). Those calling on someone who is in grief are reminded that "the bereaved person usually is not in a normal frame of mind" and that "Anger immediately after a bereavement is understandable, and individuals who vent anger are not just then in a position to examine any irrationality"

(Flesch, 1979, p. 258). Stroebe and Schut (1999) describe bereavement as "a life stressor eliciting grief" and note that "it is hard to control its overt expression, and lack of control of the emotion of grief presents difficulties for the self and others" (p. 6). And, finally, we learn that

> The potentially maladaptive outcome of grief has been described by numerous writers who warn of the possibility of the bereaved manifesting asocial or antisocial behavior which inhibits their ability to live compatibly with other persons. (Nichols, 1975, p. 26)

That grieving is viewed as related to mental disorders is also indicated by this statement from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association, found in the section on Mood Disorders in a discussion of the symptoms of a Major Depressive Episode (sadness, diminished interest or pleasure in normal activities, weight loss, insomnia, psychomotor agitation, diminished ability to think or concentrate): "Moreover, if the symptoms begin within 2 months of the loss of a loved one and do not persist beyond these 2 months, they are generally considered to result from Bereavement. . . ." (1994, p. 323).

Given this recognition in mainstream American culture that grief may cause unpredictable behavior in the bereaved, we might expect there to be some mourning customs or activities that acknowledge this possibility. We are no longer a highly ritualized culture with respect to mourning; many of the customs that once surrounded grief, such as the wearing of black for weeks or months after a death, have been for the most part set aside. The mourning customs that remain are primarily those that center around the funeral itself, and therefore, as Rosenblatt, Walsh and Jackson suggest, around

the specialists who guide that ritual, funeral directors and ministers. (For a discussion of how funeral directors allegedly created this central role for themselves during the twentieth century and have profited from it economically, see Jessica Mitford's update of her classic, The American Way of Death, 1998.)

Given that we may acknowledge in mainstream American culture the volatility of grief, do we connect that in any way with silence? Linguist Saville-Troike (1985) has created a grid in which she attempts to classify the types of silence across cultures. Her three overarching categories are "Institutionally determined silence," "Group determined silence," and "individually determined/negotiated silence." Since grieving in mainstream American culture is largely removed today from community rituals (beyond the funeral), the third category may prove the most helpful in examining silence as related to grieving for that culture. She further divides that category as follows:

1. Interactive [silence]
   a. Socio-contextual
      1) role-indicative (e.g. auditor in conversation)
      2) status-indicative (e.g. deference, superiority)
      3) situation-indicative (e.g., context-structuring, tension-management, social control
      4) tactical-symbolic/attitudinal (nonparticipation, anger, sorrow, respect, disapproval, dislike, indifference, alienation, avoidance, mitigation, concealment, mystification, dissimulation, image manipulation)
      5) phatic (emotional sharing)
   b. Linguistic
      1) discursive (prayer, fantasizing, rehearsing)
      2) propositional (negation, affirmation, consent, agreement, refusal, acknowledgement)
      3) didactic ('fill in the blank')
   c. Psychological (timidity, embarrassment, fear, neurosis)

2. Noninteractive [silence]
   a. Contemplative/meditative
   b. Inactive (p. 17)

Is there still evidence of an appreciation for the vulnerable and volatile nature of grief in whatever mourning goes on in interpersonal communication, in the activities that surround the funeral, in the interaction between the bereaved and friends and acquaintances? Specifically, is there, in mainstream American culture, as there has been in some other cultures, an acknowledgement that silence, interactive silence or noninteractive silence, is an appropriate response to grief, an appropriate way to mourn and to be in the presence of mourning? These are the questions addressed by the first set of interviews, and discussed in Chapter II.

And what of talk? As indicated earlier, though bereaved individuals vary in their need for silence or talk, there seems to be some point at which, or some context in which, talking about grieving, telling the story of their grief, is important to them. In the first set of interviews conducted, while all the subjects answered the questions I asked, at least two-thirds of them also took the opportunity to tell me, on their own initiative, some story or stories related to their own grief experiences or related to their own ideas about mourning or death. Most people, when asked about their own grief experiences, focused immediately on one particular grief experience and began to talk about it in great detail, even though some of the experiences happened as much as fifty-six years prior to the interviews. Several of the interviews went on far longer than the thirty minutes I had originally asked for, as the subjects talked at length about their experiences. They told not only about the deaths of loved ones, but about difficulties with other surviving family members, about their own near-death experiences or experiences of seeing death or dead people unknown to them, about mystical experiences related to grief, and about their

concern about mourning customs that they perceive as false or dishonest or too extravagant. It was obvious that they needed, at this point, at least, to talk, and that my bringing up the subjects of death, grief and mourning through my questions gave them permission to do that talking, to tell their stories. It may indeed be that, because death is mostly a taboo subject in our culture, I gave them an opportunity they have seldom had to talk about their grief experiences. (It should be noted as well that all of those interviewed were people with whom I was already acquainted. This may have resulted in a comfort that facilitated their story-telling.)

A local hospice organization offers this slogan to members of its grief support groups: "Every sorrow needs 100 tellings." As I write these words, it is a truth we as a nation are much aware of. In the grieving people are experiencing after the terrorist attacks on the east coast, there can be solace in talking about it. Say what you will about our voyeurism, or our techno-age expectation of "you are there" immediacy in news coverage; I am convinced that part of the reason we stay in front of our television sets and computers during such a time, or keep our radios on, is because we need to hear words that will give meaning to events that seem tragically, horribly meaningless. We need to hear others utter those words, and we need to repeat them to others, to discuss them with others. We may need our times of silence, but we also need to talk about grief.

And when we talk about grief, what words do we use? According to Lakoff (1993, p. 205), "As soon as one gets away from concrete physical experience and starts talking about abstractions or emotions, metaphorical understanding is the norm."

A metaphor, most simply, involves "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 5). Aristotle said that "a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars" (Poetics, 1459a). Contemporary metaphor theory defines metaphor as cross-domain mapping, that is, "conceptualizing one mental domain in terms of another" (Lakoff, 1993, p. 203). Contemporary theory, most specifically the theory articulated by Lakoff and Johnson, recognizes that metaphor is not just poetic device or rhetorical flourish, nor is it even characteristic of language alone, but is "pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 3). So, when we think and speak and write about emotions, such as grief, we most often do so using metaphor.

The particular connection between emotions and metaphor has been explored for a good many years by therapists, psychiatrists and psychologists. A number have discussed the use of metaphor in psychotherapy (Gordon, 1978; Barker, 1985, 1996; Mills and Crowley, 1986; Christie and McGrath, 1987; Schwartze-Borden, 1992; Sinai, 1997; Levitt, Korman and Angus, 2000). Most of these recommend that a therapist either create a metaphor (in the form of a metaphorical statement, a story, or a metaphorical object) to offer to the patient in treatment or listen carefully for metaphors occurring naturally in the patient's discourse and help her/him recognize the significance of these metaphors in putting shape or meaning around emotional experience. Gordon notes, "When you as a people-helper listen to a client talk about his situation, he is presenting to you a set of metaphors which you make sense of as best you can" (p. 10). There is also

the sense that the creation of the metaphors themselves, and the recognition of them by the patient, is healing: "In successfully conjuring up the 'third thing' via a linking of two domains, the patient has performed a synthesizing operation. . .; it is as though bits of the self get linked together and that experience. . .can produce blissful feelings of oneness. . .as well as the pride of mastery" (Siegelman, pp. 20-21).

Because grief is so intensely emotional, and therefore abstract, we would expect discourse about it to be rich in metaphor. And, since people in psychotherapeutic treatment for emotional difficulties, including grieving, use metaphors to speak of their emotions and these metaphors seem to offer the possibility of healing, we would expect metaphors to be used as well in the discourse of bereaved individuals who are not necessarily in therapy but who verbalize their grieving, present or past, in other ways. And we would expect to find metaphors in the discourse of bereavement professionals, even when they are not speaking about using metaphor in treatment.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999), in their "Integrated Theory of Primary Metaphor," suggest that we conceptualize, reason about and visualize the abstract and subjective in terms of sensi-motor experience (p. 45). In other words, we think and talk about what is beyond the body in terms of the body, in terms of the physical. For example, when we talk about affection, we talk about it in terms of physical temperature: "They greeted me warmly." When we speak of happiness, we may speak of it as bodily orientation: "I'm feeling up today." We may describe intimacy in terms of physical closeness: "We've been close for years," or abstract unifying relationships in terms of our experience of physical objects:"How do the pieces of this theory fit together?" We use the language of physical

motion to talk about the passage of time: "Time flies," and that of physical vision to talk about knowledge: "I see what you mean" (Examples from Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, pp. 50-54).

Lakoff and Johnson offer as part of their structure of conceptual metaphors (the cognitive mechanism for conceptualizing a subjective experience in terms of a sensi-motor experience) two they call "Basic Event-Structure Metaphors." These are both complex mappings with a number of submappings. (They, and others, use the term "mapping" to describe what we do when we speak of one concept in terms of another: when we say "Time flies" we map the domain of physical motion onto the domain of time.) The first of these metaphors, the Location Event-Structure Metaphor, in which events are conceptualized in terms of locations, includes: States are Locations (i.e., the mapping of a location onto a state, as "I'm close to being in a depression"), Changes are Movements ("My car has gone from bad to worse"), Causes are Forces and Causation Is Forced Movement ("They pushed the bill through Congress"), Actions Are Self-propelled Movements ("I'm moving right along on the project"), Purposes Are Destinations ("He'll be successful, but he isn't there yet"), Means Are Paths ("This training will provide a way for her to reach her goal"), Difficulties Are Impediments To Motion ("She's trying to get around the regulations"), Freedom of Action Is The Lack of Impediments To Motion ("The degree will open doors for you"), External Events Are Large, Moving Objects ("Things took a turn for the worse"), and Long-term, Purposeful Activities Are Journeys ("They've moved on in their relationship") (pp. 179-194). The second, the Object-Event Structure Metaphor, in which events are conceptualized in terms of objects, has as its submappings: Attributes Are Possessions ("I have a

headache"), Changes Are Movements Of Possessions ("My headache went away"), Causation Is Transfer of Possessions ("The noise gave me a headache"), Purposes Are Desired Objects and Achieving A Purpose Is Acquiring A Desired Object ("Fame and fortune were within my grasp") (pp. 186, 194-197).

Lakoff and Turner in an earlier work (1989) discuss how death fits into the Event-Structure mappings: Death Is Going To A Final Destination (as in "She reached the end of her life") (p. 14); Life Is A Precious Possession (p. 52) and therefore Death Is Losing A Precious Possession. as in "He lost his life". They do not, however, discuss grieving.

But, because grieving is sometimes conceived of as a "location event" (people are "in" mourning, or "in" the process of grieving) and sometimes as an "object event" (people grieve when they suffer a loss), we might expect many metaphors about grieving to come under the framework of Event-Structure. These would be metaphors that could be termed "conventional"—i.e., common enough in the discourse of a community that they are not normally thought of as metaphorical. And, because, as noted in the discussion of therapy literature above, grieving people often create unique metaphors to talk about their own grief, we might expect other metaphors used in grieving discourse to be more like those referred to by therapists —"novel metaphors," (Lakoff, 1993, p. 229), metaphors whose use is not everyday, metaphors which are more striking and unusual than the conceptual, conventional metaphors, more likely to result from and in new awareness of relationships between concepts. Novel metaphors include image metaphors, in which one image is mapped onto another image (as in "You are my sunshine" or "The road was a ribbon unwinding downhill") but also metaphors that are extensions of conventional metaphors. An example of such an extension would be the comment a student made recently about

his girlfriend's grandmother who, he said, provides "the speed bumps in our relationship." He has taken the conventional metaphor, Love Is A Journey, and extended it imaginatively, novelly.

What metaphors, then, do people use when they talk about grieving? Do the metaphors fit into Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual model, and, if so, how? If not, how might they otherwise be classified or described? These questions were addressed by returning to the transcripts of the first set of interviews, and conducting a second set, and are discussed further in Chapter III.

To look at how we communicate our grieving, then, is to observe, from the particular perspective of grieving, how we as humans communicate, and to observe, from the particular perspective of communication, how we as humans grieve. While the two chapters that follow do not provide a comprehensive view of either perspective, hopefully they do offer a glimpse that is both representative and informative.

Chapter II: A Time for Silence and A Time for Speech

Introduction

We have seen that some cultures have had or do have mechanisms or customs that provide or even require times of silence for those who are grieving, and for those in the presence of the bereaved. Is there is mainstream American culture an acknowledgement that silence is an appropriate response to grief or an appropriate way to be in the presence of mourning? Do middle-class Mid-westerners need speech or silence when they grieve? What do they believe about the needs of others for speech or silence in mourning?

Method

In order to explore the questions relating to preference for silence or speech, I interviewed twenty-six individuals about their perceptions of the place of silence and speech in mourning. The interviewees were all white, middle-class Americans living in Oklahoma. Four were grief professionals (counselors or hospice or funeral home workers, one of whom also had had a personal grief experience), five were clergy (four of whom also had had personal grief experiences), and the other seventeen were people in other professions (homemakers, teachers, a personnel worker, a choir director, a beautician, several retired business persons and educators, a student). All were people

who would consider themselves "churched" in the Protestant tradition. Fifteen were female and eleven were male, and their ages ranged from 17 to 78. Of the subjects who had experienced personal grief and were not speaking only as grief professionals, 14 had experienced the death of a loved one less than three years prior to the interview and for 6 the death had occurred longer than three years before.

In the interviews I asked three basic questions: 1) In your own grief experience, what do you remember about your need for either speech or silence? 2) What do you remember about the speech or silence of other people who were around you in this grief experience? and 3) When you are in the presence of someone grieving, do you find yourself responding with speech or silence or both? Other questions in the interviews varied according to the situation of the subject and his or her answers to the first three questions. The interviews were recorded on tape with the permission of the subjects. After transcribing the interviews, I analyzed them by looking for indications of whether the subjects expressed a need for speech or silence or both in mourning, and by looking for any other trends or characteristics of grieving communication.

Findings: Answers to Questions

In answer to the first question, "What was your own need in grief for speech or silence?" subjects' responses varied considerably. Of the twenty who responded to that question, eleven subjects (five female, six male), spoke of needing both speech and silence in their grieving; five (three female, two male) spoke only of the need for silence, and four (all female) spoke only of the need for speech. Of the eleven who remembered

needing both speech and silence, four (two female and two male) said they needed a mixture of speech and silence in no particular time sequence; five (two female, three male) said they needed silence first and later needed speech; and two (one female and one male) said they initially needed speech and afterwards needed silence. Also, two subjects spoke of having different needs in different grief experiences.

Those who remembered a need for both speech and silence, but did not remember needing one more than the other, said such things as: "There were times I wanted to be by myself. . . .But also the more you can talk about it and relive it the better for you it is. . . ." (70-year-old female); "I needed a little of both, talking and silence" (50-year-old male); "There are times when you want to talk and times when you want to be quiet" (36-year-old female); and "I needed both at once, sometimes one, sometimes the other" (17-year-old male).

Those subjects who said they first needed silence and later speech said: "I needed to be alone. Telling someone didn't convey how I felt. But then I did want people who were significant to me to know" (50-year-old male, clergy); "I'm very stoic. I'd just as soon be alone. . .not talking. After a while I wanted to talk about it" (73-year-old female); "My first need was silence. Then, later, when I wanted to talk, I had to seek out someone to talk to" (49-year-old male, grief professional); "I'm more of a silent person. When my grandfather died I felt like I had to be strong for my mom, listen to her. I found myself talking about grandpa later after I got home" (34-year-old female); and,

> The first two days I was in incredible shock. There was a lot of questioning. . . . mostly internal. Then for about two weeks I needed to rehearse what had happened, to tell it over and over and to hear wisdom from different people who knew something

about what had happened. (42-year-old male, clergy)

Those who remembered needing to talk and then to be silent said: "I wanted to get over it as quick as I could, not grieve any longer than I had to. That meant not talking about it anymore after the funeral. Before that I appreciated people's sympathy" (78-year-old male); and "There was a time when I needed people to be around and to talk but there also came a time when I needed my solitude to do my own grieving" (75-year-old female).

From those who spoke only of the need for silence came the following: "I just wanted to be alone. I didn't really need to talk" (67-year-old female); "We couldn't talk. We were so stricken. There are times when just sitting there is what you need" (65-year-old female); "There was no talking; there were no words to say. Normally that's how I react, physical contact but not really saying anything. There's nothing to say" (36-year-old male); "I didn't know how talking to someone was going to help anything" (36-year-old male); and

> I remember needing a lot of silence. So much of grief for me is private. I knew if I had to sit and cry I'd have to find a place to be alone. It's almost as urgent as having to find a place to throw up or go to the bathroom. (37-year-old female, clergy)

Comments from those who spoke only of the need for speech included: "I think talking is good. It helped to tell the story to different people. It helped to have someone listen and be willing to talk about it" (65-year-old female); "I wanted to grieve, to relieve myself. I needed to talk to people" (74-year-old female); "It would not be normal to not

talk about it. It was all I could think about. I never wanted to just be alone" (77-year-old female); and "For me silence means them listening to me talk. I remember right after my husband died wanting to run around and tell everybody" (57-year-old female).

It was clear that sometimes when subjects talked about silence, they were thinking of silence in isolation, being by themselves, not in contact with others: "Well, you have a need for both, both for talking and for being quiet and alone" (75-year-old female); "And a lot of time if I knew I had to sit and cry, then I knew I had to find a place to be alone" (37-year-old female, clergy); "But I guess what I needed right after he passed away, I wanted just to be alone" (67-year-old female).

In answer to the second question, "What do you remember about the speech or silence of other people?", five subjects spoke of their memories of those around them talking: "Most people who came to the house talked but not necessarily about the situation" (70-year-old female); "People who came talked quite a bit about memories" (67-year-old female); "They did a lot of talking. It was that way for the first few days" (49-year-old male, grief professional); "I can remember people talking and telling stories about my mother, and that was helpful" (17-year-old male). Some people also spoke of things they wished people hadn't said:

> I didn't need the woman coming who had lost her adult daughter a year or two earlier. All she did was cry and talk about her. Also the people who say "I know just how you feel' haven't a clue unless they've experienced it themselves. (75-year-old female)

and, "I resented people who said things like 'Oh, you'll get over it' and 'You'll go on with your life'" (67-year-old female).

Fifteen of those interviewed talked about the strength of someone who can be silently present to a griever: "I once was called to the bedside of a young man dying of leukemia. As I knelt there crying, his father put his arm around me and just stood there. He never said a word. It was powerfully caring" (50-year-old male, clergy); "It shows up in households where there is intimacy, with people who are just there. It's not just the silence that's significant, but what's underneath it. It has to come from the truth" (42-year-old male, clergy); "There were people who just made sure coffee was made and did things behind the scenes. They were showing compassion. They were the most comforting" (50-year-old male); "There were some relatives and friends who just let me know they were there, and that was all I really needed, to know they were there" (67-year-old female); "I had a friend who had an uncanny ability to know when to be quiet" (49-year-old male, grief professional); "I've appreciated close friends just being there, not saying anything" (78-year-old male); "You understand they're grieving with you, just being there" (74-year-old female); "I remember the people who just came and did something, like washed dishes" (36-year-old male); "Some people did nothing but hug me close. That says it all" (75-year-old female); "I need presence, close presence and physical contact. Silent presence is profound" (57-year-old female); "One person came and simply sat on the couch. He never did say anything. I remember how powerfully comforted I felt by his silent presence" (50-year-old female, clergy); "Silence where

people are attending is more comforting than speech" (37-year-old female);"When you're going to visit someone who is in grief, if you don't know what to say, don't say anything. Just give them a hug or pat them on the shoulder" (89-year-old female, grief professional); and,

> I remember waiting with a woman while her husband had surgery. The doctor came and just stood at the door. He just looked at her, and engaged her eyes, and took a breath. He didn't say anything for a long time. It was the most caring way I've ever seen a doctor be. His emotional presence to the pain was so evident. (35-year-old female, clergy);

> People need attentive silence. . . .We tell our volunteers, "If you don't know what to do, be present and be silent." We tell people to do dishes, get ice water, look after people, don't talk. (55-year old female, grief professional)

There was also the acknowledgement that sometimes the silence of those around the grieving person is experienced as negative: "Some silence is just a real looking past, an avoidance, a stigmatizing. Or pretending" (37-year-old female); "[People think] 'Let's don't mention it. Let's don't talk about it. Let's steer clear of her because she might bring it up'"(57-year-old female); "And I've noticed that people avoid talking about [the deceased], or the fact that they're—of course, they sympathize with you, but they don't want to—I guess it's because they don't want to remind you of it, as though you could forget." (70-year-old female).

In answering the third question, "In the presence of others' grief, do you find yourself responding with speech or silence?" six subjects (three female, three male) spoke of responding with silence or "not saying much." They said things like: "I don't say a lot or give undue comfort" (50-year-old male, clergy); "I just go and be there mostly. I don't talk very much" (67-year-old female); and "I'd just as soon go and sit with them and be quiet if that's what they want" (49-year-old male, grief professional). One female subject spoke of responding mostly with speech: "I'm a blabbermouth. I try to get to the nitty gritty" (65-year-old female). Three female subjects said they take their cue for speech or silence from the grieving person, though two of them emphasized speech as what they believed people most often seemed to need: "I put my arm around them and love them and let it go from there. You can tell what they feel and what they want. Most of them want to talk" (77-year-old female).

One male subject said he hates to go visit "when there's been a death" because he doesn't know what to say: "Mostly I just keep quiet and don't stay very long" (78-year-old male). Another male subject said, "I have trouble knowing what to say when I'm around people grieving. So I avoid the situation, mostly" (47-year-old male).

Findings: Other Themes

In addition to answering the questions about silence and speech, the subjects brought up on their own in the interviews the following issues: 1) belief in the uniqueness of mourning, 2) the discomfort our society has with death and grieving, 3) the discomfort

our society has with silence, and 4) gender differences in mourning. Over and over again people said, in a variety of ways, that they believed that everyone's response to grief is different: "Grief is a personal thing. People react in different ways" (89-year-old female, grief professional); "I want to be responsive to who they are and what they need. I don't know how they will take the death. It depends on the person" (50-year-old male, clergy); "It's a very personal thing, something no one else would understand" (50-year-old male); "I think we need to be a little more sensitive about how they feel and not how we feel" (67-year-old female); "We don't tell our people how to grieve. We tell them that their grief is unique, that there's no right or wrong way" (55-year-old female, grief professional); "The best friend or counselor is the one able to perceive at the moment what the griever wants and react to that" (49-year-old male, grief professional); "It depends a lot on the person and the life they've had" (73-year-old female); "I know there's all different kinds of people" (74-year-old female); "Nobody knows how the other person feels. Probably not two people feel the same. It's individual, different with different people" (78-year-old male): "How you deal with the pain is as unique as how people learn" (39-year-old male); "Every individual has their own way of dealing with it" (36-year-old female); "Each person deals with it differently---whatever's in your heart, whatever fits you best" (34-year-old female); "It depends on the family and on the person (17-year-old male); "It just has to be whatever the person wants, what is helpful and meaningful to the people involved" (77-year-old female); "So people can just reflect on their grief the way they need to do it" (47-year-old male, grief professional); "I'm sure it's according to different people" (75-year-old female); "You probably have a range there" (57-year-old female); "It seems like the grieving person sets the pace. With some

people, the enormity of it, you're struck dumb. Other times you're compelled to say something" (50-year-old female, clergy).

The subjects felt our society has a discomfort with death and grief and mourning, which may sometimes result in a silence of avoidance, and a discomfort with silence, which at times may result in speech in mourning situations because silence is simply not tolerable. Comments related to these themes included: "Something about our culture avoids speaking or even thinking about death" (70-year-old female); "We expect people to be over grief very quickly, to be back in the mainstream. There's hardly anything left of community grief. People don't like silence. They feel uncomfortable" (49-year-old male, grief professional); "People don't want to talk about it. They want to talk about anything else" (73-year-old female); "I feel like my other family members feel like it's time to quit—you shouldn't grieve that long. They don't think talking about the ones who died is doing me any good" (74-year-old female); "I fell and hurt myself and was in the hospital the week after my husband died. I think I had more visitors because of that. It's easier for us to visit someone who's sick than someone who's grieving" (57-year-old female); "I think our culture doesn't know how to deal with death straight-on" (50-year-old female, clergy); "I think we've lost the feel for silence in our culture, and for mourning" (55-year-old female, grief professional); "Our culture is uncomfortable with silence. I work with groups and one thing you learn is, if you want people to talk, you be quiet, and pretty soon somebody will talk" (36-year-old male); "I think we're uncomfortable with silence" (75-year-old female); and "People who do a lot of talking around someone who is grieving often think their words will fix things. They think, 'When I'm silent, nothing is happening'" (42-year-old male, clergy).

Several people mentioned that they believed there are differences between how women and men mourn, and how they respond to grief and to those who are grieving. Three female subjects said that they believe women deal with grieving better than men do, that they are stronger. One male subject reflected that men in our society don't talk as much about grief as women do, perhaps because they do not wish to seem to reveal weakness. The idea that there is a "fake" or hypocritical side to mourning was mentioned by three male subjects. Two of them referred specifically to funeral directors who "put on the image" of being sad when, in fact, it is just a job to them, and mentioned the commercialization of funerals and how expensive they are. One was concerned with what he perceived to be the insincerity of "about 80%" of what people say about someone who has died.

Reflections

Mainstream American culture, as has been mentioned, is a culture which has lost much of its ritual, due in part, no doubt, to the rapid change this country has experienced during its history, and probably also due, in the case of mourning rituals, to the way in which medical procedures have removed death from our common experience (infant mortality rates are down, people live longer, and, when they die, they are more likely to do so in a hospital than at home). So there is little ritual in our culture related to mourning, few customs that can be said to be considered normative, beyond the customs of a funeral, a procession to the cemetery (though these are often today replaced with a graveside

service), a casket, food brought to the bereaved, and cards or other correspondence of condolence. Though funeral directors and ministers may indeed fulfill the role of ritual specialist in our culture, certainly few if any of the rituals that might once have been used to separate, isolate, or mark the mourner are still in place, rituals such as the wearing of black or the placing of wreaths on the doors of mourners. And, there seems to be no ritual or custom that officially recognizes silence as an appropriate response to grieving, as an accepted way to mourn, except perhaps that funeral homes themselves tend to be places of "quiet." It is possible that some of the uneasiness expressed by some of the subjects about knowing what to say in the presence of grieving, and some of the silence experienced by the subjects in response to their own mourning, is an almost unconscious recognition of the uncertainty about the mood and possible actions of the bereaved that is ritually acknowledged in other cultures by such things as marking or silence. But it is certainly not clearly delineated in our culture as silence for this reason.

The responses of the subjects do correspond to Tannen's (1985) description of the "ambiguous value of silence," which can be "seen as positive when it is taken as evidence of the existence of something positive underlying" (p. 94)—i.e. the comments about appreciating those who came and performed helpful tasks and offered their presence, but not their talk—and "negatively valued if it is assumed to be the omission of something positive" (p. 95), as in the laments that some people talk about "everything else" and don't want to talk about the death or the grief. And the silences can be mapped on Saville-Troike's grid. Silence that seems to be based on respect for the grieving person, such as the silence of those who "take their cue" from the griever's apparent need for silence, could be seen as interactive, socio-contextual, and tactical-symbolic/attitudinal.

So could the silence based on avoidance, the silence of those who avoid talking about the deceased person or even avoid the griever because she/he might want to talk. The silence of those whose presence the bereaved finds comforting, even though they do not speak, would be silence that is interactive, socio-contextual, and phatic, based on the sharing of emotions. This is the silence that Dauenhauer (1980) calls "deep silence. . . .the utterance engaged in among intimates [which] is oriented to and finds its place in the silence in which the intimates abide" (p. 17). Those who "come and sit on the couch" or prepare coffee and are a comforting presence would seem to fit this category. The silence of grievers themselves could, in a social situation, also be interactive, socio-contextual, and tactical-symbolic/attitudinal, based on their own sorrow. The silence of the griever when she or he is alone would be noninteractive, contemplative or meditative silence (Saville-Troike, pp. 16-17). All of these types of silence were reported by the subjects as present and/or needed during their grieving.

There were few if any differences in the responses of the clergy and grief professionals as compared to the responses of the other subjects. The clergy and grief professionals did usually express an awareness that different people have different needs for speech and silence, and that both speech and silence can be used as avoidance, but so did several of the other subjects. Similarly, there were no significant differences in the needs for speech or silence between those whose grief experience was within the three years prior to the interview and those for whom more time had passed. The need seems to be based more on a personal preference than on the recentness of the bereavement.

There would seem to be some gender difference indicated in the responses of the subjects interviewed. There was a slight tendency in the male subjects interviewed to

prefer silence to speech in grief situations; though only two of the eleven males reported needing only silence, more males than females needed silence first and later speech, and no males reported needing only speech. This would seem to somewhat support the belief of one male subject that men "just won't talk about how they grieve." His explanation for this is that "talking about it might reveal something that you don't want another man to know about." It is also interesting that only male subjects seemed concerned about the inauthenticity of some grieving rituals, or of the words spoken by some in the presence of grievers. It would be interesting to explore further whether this discomfort with the perceived "falseness" of some talk about grieving is a way of defending the preference for not talking or is in some less conscious way a part of gender differences in the expression of emotions.

There is still in our culture, however, among persons of both genders, as the responses of the subjects reveal, a need for silence in times of grieving, at least by some, and a recognition that silence in the presence of the one who is grieving may indeed be not only appropriate but strengthening and comforting, particularly if the silence is combined with physical contact and/or the providing of other types of care for the bereaved and their guests. (The coffee, ice water, food, etc. mentioned by the subjects could be seen as a part of the sharing of emotions among intimates and as a sort of symbolic speech in themselves.)

There is also a very strong belief evident in the interview responses in the right of the individual to express grief in the way she or he needs to express it, a belief that might be expected of a society that values individualism as much as ours seems to. This stress on the uniqueness of the grief experience is also found in grief literature, where we read such

statements as: "There is one hard and fast rule about viewing the body: *Do whatever you feel like doing or not doing.* There is not a right or wrong way to do it" (Deits, 1988, p. 64); "No two wounds are identical, so the healing rates will differ. Each person's emotional bandage is unique" (Kolf, 1988, p. 21); "It is true, no one has ever grieved *exactly* as we are grieving, because no two people face even the same kind of loss in the same way (Westberg, 1971, p. 29); "Individual differences in the need for catharsis are as wide and widespread as they are in other matters affecting human conduct" (Lamers, 1975, p. 255); ". . .allowing the bereaved to express their grief in their own way without insisting that it be done 'our' way. . . ." (Dalton, 1979, p. 155); ". . .the reaction of people to personal bereavement is. . .varied in the sense that no two people react to a similar situation in any identical way (Kutscher and Kutscher, 1969, p. 207); "People grieve in their own way and in their own time" (Rodebaugh, Schwindt and Valentine, 1999, p. 2);

> In the case of bereavement. . .each person has a unique constellation of culture, social context, and connections to the object of grief so that everyone is limited in how much he or she can understand what another person is feeling. (Rosenblatt, 1976, p. 111); and,

> Your loss is first and foremost *yours* regardless of who also is affected. Because loss is so personal, it is often very difficult to share your feelings with others and equally difficult for them to understand you. . . .Your recovery is also a personal experience. How you respond to your loss will be similar to the way your friends and family handle their losses. But it will also be uniquely yours because you are a unique person. (Deits 33).

This emphasis on the individual and the uniqueness of grief and therefore the normality of mourning differences gives some room for those who need silence to receive it. However, two of the other themes evident in the interview responses, the discomfort in our society with death and all that is related to it, and the discomfort with silence, work against the fulfilling of that need. We may be willing to allow the mourner the silence she or he wants for a time, and in limited ways, but because we are as a culture so impatient with grieving, so desirous of avoiding anything that reminds us of death, we will allow any mourning response for only so long and probably only in certain places—i.e., in the confines of the home of the mourner. Kastenbaum (1977) reminds us that "People will still gather around for the funeral and for a limited amount of related ritual and visiting. After that, however, the bereaved is on his own. Continued expression of distress becomes seen as deviant""(p. 261). And, because silence is not something our culture finds acceptable in most circumstances ("Our culture tends to place a great emphasis on verbal communication and to downplay the role of silence" – Shelton, 1993, p. 5), mourners may find that those around them are simply not able to honor their need for silence and fill any voids with talk, often talk about matters unrelated to the grief situation.

So are those in our society who need silence as a part of mourning doomed to have that need mostly ignored? There does seem to be some hope for the meeting of that need in the responses of the subjects who recognized the need for silence and claimed to be willing to offer the mourner whatever she or he needs. Though many of the subjects reported a response to the grief of others that was directly related to what they said they

themselves needed (i.e., those who needed silence spoke of offering that to others), there was also considerable evidence that the subjects were sensitive to the variety of needs the bereaved person might have. There is also some hope for meeting the need for silence in the comments of one of the grief professionals interviewed, who directs a hospice program. She said that she believes there will be a reversal of our culture's lack of contact with death, for three reasons: the AIDS crisis, the health care crisis, and the spread of the hospice movement. These phenomena, she says, will most likely result in more people dying at home, by choice or by necessity. Thus we will once again begin to be familiar with death. This will also mean, she believes, that new rituals will be created around mourning. Perhaps some of those rituals will involve silence.

But, rituals or no rituals, these interviews would seem to suggest that people today in white, middle-class American culture need both silence and talk while mourning. Though the needs are individual and unique, mourners have enough in common to suggest that we would do well to remember and continue to hold up before ourselves an awareness of these needs, both for silence and for speech, as we acknowledge the inevitability of our own grief experiences, and as we relate to and respond to others as they mourn.

Chapter III: Metaphors: The Journey Toward Healing a Loss

Introduction

One characteristic mourners seem to have in common is that, sooner or later, they need to talk about their grief experience. Even those who claimed, in the interviews discussed in Chapter II, not to need much talk, spent considerable time during the interview talking about their own grief, telling their own story. And, since metaphors are a part of our human communication about emotion, there must be metaphor in those stories. What metaphors, then, do people use when they talk about grieving? Do the metaphors fit into Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual model, and, if so, how?

Method

In an attempt to answer the questions about metaphor in grief talk, I went back to the data from the interviews regarding issues of speech and silence, this time looking for metaphor use. In addition, I conducted second interviews (six years later) with thirteen of the original twenty-six subjects, and one additional subject (the husband of an original subject). Ten of these subjects were female, four were male, and their ages ranged from 40 to 83. Four were clergy, one was a grief professional; the other subjects included one teacher, one choir director, one CPA, one business person, and five retired persons. In

these interviews I asked questions designed to elicit metaphors about grieving: 1) Can you tell me what grieving feels like, how you'd describe what it's like? 2) If you were talking to someone who had not ever experienced the death of someone they cared about and you were trying to give that person a sense of what it might be like, how would you describe it to them? 3) What kinds of things do you think our culture says, or what kinds of things have you heard other people say, about what grieving is like? 4) Complete this sentence: Experiencing the death of someone you love is like. . . . 5) Complete this sentence: Grieving is like. . . . Again, the interviews were taped with the subjects' permission.

Graham Low (1999, pp. 49-50) has pointed out some of the dangers inherent when researchers examine text and "unilaterally decide what is and is not metaphorical." Among these are the subjectivity or randomness in identifying expressions not marked by the speaker as metaphoric; the problem of the researcher being so sensitive to metaphor, particularly kinds of metaphors with which they may have been working for some time, that they tend to see one under every phrase, so to speak; and several problems related to familiarity: the researcher's familiarity with specific words, with the overall text, and with a topic or discourse community, all of which could affect her or his perception of what is and is not metaphorical.

A first step in addressing and perhaps lessening the dangers inherent in metaphor research would seem to be some stated definition of metaphor out of which the researcher is operating, making the identification at least not quite so random, if not less subjective. For the purpose of this study I have adopted the following definition of metaphor, derived from Lakoff and Johnson (1980): *a linguistic expression that*

establishes a conceptual connection between two domains, a source domain and a target domain. I am including under this umbrella both novel metaphors—what Lakoff and Turner (1989) have called fleeting or image metaphors plus what Grady (1999) terms resemblance metaphors, metaphors that do not map an image, but nevertheless involve a limited conceptual projection—and conceptual mappings, which typically have rich detail in the mapping from one domain to another and are most likely based in physical experience.

I have attempted to put further limits on the randomness (but, alas, probably not the subjectivity) of identifying metaphor by using Cameron's (1999, p. 118) "necessary conditions" for linguistic metaphor:

> N1 – it contains a reference to a Topic domain by a Vehicle term (or terms) [read "target" and "source" instead of "topic" and "vehicle" to match the terminology in the definition above], and
>
> N2 – there is potentially an incongruity between the domain of the Vehicle term and the Topic domain, and
>
> N3 – it is possible for a receiver (in general, or a particular person), as a member of a particular discourse community, to find a coherent interpretation which makes sense of the incongruity in its discourse context, and which involves some transfer of meaning from the Vehicle domain.

Further, for the purposes of this research I have included all forms of metaphorical expression (nominative, verbal, adjective, etc.) and I have included similes as a subcategory of metaphor.

After conducting the second interviews and transcribing them, I then "trawled" (Cameron's term) for metaphors in the transcripts of both sets of interviews, using the definitions and necessary conditions above. After a list of metaphorical expressions was obtained, I then classified them as either novel or image metaphors or conceptual mappings and grouped metaphors in each class that seemed related to one another. Analysis included considering which specific metaphors were used most frequently in the discourse about grieving, which class of metaphors was used most frequently, whether there were differences in metaphors used by laypersons and grieving professionals, and whether any other observations could be made about bereavement metaphors based on the evidence.

Findings

Sifting through the interview transcripts looking for metaphors yielded 290 instances of metaphor use. (When the same metaphor was used in the same "stretch" of language, a stretch being defined as extended talk by the subject uninterrupted by another question from the interviewer, it was only counted as one instance.) Expressions occurring more than once in the subjects' discourse can be grouped under the following complex metaphors:

Grieving Is A Journey (sub-groupings: Grieving Is Traveling Through A Passageway; Grieving Is A Stopping Place Or Detour On Life's Journey; Grieving Is An Obstacle On The Journey; Grieving Is A Journey Of Its Own)

Grieving Is Response To A Loss

Grieving Is Healing Or Response To A Wound Or Disease

Grieving Is Response To A Physical Force

Grieving Is A Process

Grieving Is Work

Grieving Is A Container (sub-grouping: The Self Is A Container Filled With Grief

Grieving Is A Burden

Grieving Is A Way Of Seeing.

There were fourteen metaphorical expressions in the discourse that are examples of novel metaphors (sometimes using extensions of the metaphor mappings of the above).

The Location-Event Structure metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 179) maps the domain of motion-in-space onto the domain of events. It is made up of a number of conceptual metaphors, including Actions Are Self-Propelled Movements, Purposes Are Destinations, Means Are Paths, Difficulties Are Impediments To Action, and Long-term, Purposeful Activities Are Journeys. This metaphorical mapping results in the metaphors Grieving Is Traveling Through A Passageway, Grieving Is A Stopping Place Or Detour on Life's Journey, Grieving Is An Obstacle On The Journey, and Grieving Is A Journey

Of Its Own. These journey metaphors were the most frequently used metaphorical expressions in the discourse at hand, present in sixty-seven total stretches of language (thirty-nine by females and twenty-eight by males).

Examples of the passageway metaphor are: ". . .everybody goes through this" (70-year-old female); "I've gone through that" (39-year-old male); ". . .we went through a very difficult grieving situation" (65-year-old female); ". . .other people's going through grief" (56-year-old male); "It took me a long, long time to get through it" (55-year-old male, grief professional). Examples of Grieving Is A Stopping Place Or Detour are: "She never moved on from that" (75-year-old female); ". . .somehow reconnect with life going on" (41-year-old female, clergy); "You'll just go ahead with your life. . . ." (67-year-old female); ". . .get back into the mainstream faster" (49-year-old male, grief professional); "You're supposed to just snap out of it nowadays and just get on with it" (63-year-old female); "It's like. . .you're lost" (81-year-old female). Grieving As An Obstacle On The Journey is evident in: ". . .after I got over the first part of my grief. . ." (67-year-old female); "I'm not over my wife," (49-year-old male, grief professional); "People are ready for me to be over this"(57-year-old female); "It's something you don't think you'll ever get over" (73-year-old female). And, the idea that Grieving Is A Journey of itself is present in: "Well, it's been a two-year journey for me" (57-year-old female); ". . .they can take step number one" (55-year-old male, grief professional); and ". . .you don't walk in their shoes. You have your own shoes"(73-year-old female).

The complex metaphor Grieving Is Response To A Loss is derived from the Object-Event Structure Metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 198), which includes Attributes

Are Possessions and Changes Are Movements Of Possessions. In this mapping, the loved one is seen as an attribute, and therefore a possession, and the death of the loved one as the change that is talked about as loss. This complex conceptual metaphor was the second most frequently used by the interview subjects, present in sixty-three stretches of language (forty-four by females, nineteen by males) In this metaphor, grieving is response to the loss, as in "She lost her mother" (70-year-old female); "But she'd lost two children" (75-year-old female); ". . .the loss of a loved one" (49-year-old male, grief professional); "[Grieving is] a longing for something that you are missing or that you have lost" (40-year-old female); "[Grieving is] not having something that you had at one time, and you miss it" (56-year-old male, clergy); "You know deaths are real losses. . . ." (55-year-old male, grief professional). Sometimes the loss is spoken of as loss of self, or a part of self: "Because I had lost a part of me, I felt" (67-year-old female); [Experiencing the death of a loved one is like] losing a part of yourself" (81-year-old female); "I just didn't know who I was for a time" (81-year-old female); ". . .to get what I've considered a grip on my life" (57-year-old female).

The third most frequently used metaphorical expression (forty-seven stretches of language, thirty-nine by females and eight by males) was Grieving Is Healing. This complex metaphor is derived from the primary metaphor Causes Are Physical Forces (a part of the Location Event Structure Metaphor) and The Mind Is A Body (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, pp. 53 & 238). Thus the mapping: The Death Of A Loved One Is A Physical Blow – An Emotional Wound Is A Physical Wound Or Illness – Emotional Duress Is Physical Pain – Grieving Is Healing Or Recovery Or Recuperation - A Grieving

Person Is A Survivor – Care Offered By Others Is Physical Comfort. Examples are : "And it was so painful. . . ." (65-year-old female); ". . .they would really be hurt" (39-year-old male); ". . .the most profound kind of pain. . . .(50-year-old female, clergy); " [Grieving is] an ache" (43-year-old female);; ". . .they all hurt. And they all have heartache" (73-year-old female); ". . .look how hard I'm suffering" (50-year-old male); "[Grieving is] having wounds" (63-year-old female); "And if someone else goes to comfort them. . . ." (34-year-old female); "And you want to comfort them but it's tough to know what form of comfort they'd appreciate" (75-year-old male); "I think it's healing. . . ." (73-year-old female); "There's great healing and comfort" (81-year-old female).

The complex metaphor Grieving Is Response To A Physical Force is found in twenty-seven stretches of language in the interview transcripts, twenty-two by females and five by males. Like Grieving Is Healing, it is based on the primary metaphors Causes Are Physical Forces and External Events Are Large, Moving Objects That Exert Force, both part of the Location Event-Structure Metaphor. It is combined often with the metaphors The Mind Is A Machine and The Mind Is A Brittle Object (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, pp. 27-28) so that the mappings become The Death of A Loved One Is A Physical Force, The Reaction Of The Grieving Person Is The Breaking Down Of A Machine or The Breaking Of A Brittle Object or The Receiving Of A Physical Blow. Examples of this are: "I may break alone, but it's hard to break in front of people," (73-year-old female); "They'd just go all to pieces. . . ." (73-year-old female), "Well, it just pulls the rug out from under you and tears you up" (63-year-old female); "But the full impact is delayed" (75-year-old

female); "It just kind of consumes you" (77-year-old female); ". . .somehow just the enormity of it they're just struck dumb" (58-year-old female, clergy); "When it first happens you're just so shocked about it. . . ."(75-year-old male); "Grief seems to me like a hollowing out. . . .It opens us up, empties a place. . . ." (43-year-old female); ". . .we stood up when we had to" (73-year-old female); "You just shove it back" (73-year-old female);". . .you don't take it as well" (73-year-old female); "It kind of alters you" (56-year-old female, clergy); "[Grieving is] a silent storm within. It's being forced to change" (56-year-old male, clergy). Sometimes the force is perceived as being extreme cold, as in ". . .until you're just numb. . .you get numb and you can't feel" (63-year-old female); . . .when you're not numb anymore. . . .in that numb period. . . .(63-year-old female).

Two metaphors, Grief Is A Process, and Grieving Is Work, were used in twenty-three stretches of language each in the discourse. Grief Is A Process was used in fourteen stretches of language by females and in nine by males. In this metaphor, based on The Mind Is A Machine, the output of a machine is mapped onto the output of the mind, in this case the emotion of grief. Thus the process by which a machine produces a product is mapped onto the process by which the mind produces the emotion. This process has stages. Examples of this are: ". . .they can kind of work through that whole process. . ." (47-year-old male); ". . .started my grieving process"(34-year-old female); "It's not a process that can be gone through alone" (53-year-old male); "Then as you get further in the process. . . ." (58-year-old female, clergy); "And I think there's different phases" (36-year-old female); ". . .the first part of my grief. . " (67-year-old female); ". . .the stages

you're going to go through" (77-year-old female); "Sometimes they just have to go through all the stages" (55-year-old male, grief professional); ". . .part of the healing process" (58-year-old female, clergy).

Grieving Is Work or Grieving Is A Problem To Solve (in nine female and fourteen male stretches of language) would seem to come from the metaphor The Mind Is A Body (Experiencing Emotions Is Experiencing Physical Activity). It is found in the following: ". . .to work things out themselves" (78-year-old male); ". . .do my own grieving" (75-year-old female); ". . . .kind of work through the whole process" (47-year-old male); ". . .watched them deal with it. . . ." (56-year-old male); "It becomes a major life problem" (63-year-old female); "And I couldn't handle it myself" (55-year-old male, grief professional); ". . .working with other people in their grief" (55-year-old male, grief professional); "You have to work at it" (73-year-old female); "[Grieving is like] great frustration" (75-year-old male).

There were eighteen stretches of language (nine by females and nine by males) using either the metaphor Grief Is A Container or The Self Is A Container and Grief Is The Contents. These come from the States Are Locations mapping of the Location-Event Structure Metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 179) and Physical And Emotional States Are Entities Within A Person (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, p. 50). This particular metaphor often involves the concept that emotions, in this case grief, are heated liquid or gas in a container and must be released in some way to maintain equilibrium or balance.

(Johnson, 1987, p. 88). (Lakoff and Kovecses, 1987, also discuss this idea of releasing emotion, specifically anger.) Examples of the metaphor Grief Is A Container are: "You can't just bog down in your grief" (77-year-old female); "At that time they're still in grief. . . ." (67-year-old female); ". . .I didn't even begin to come out of it for at least a year" (55-year-old male, grief professional); Examples of the metaphors The Self Is A Container and Grief Is The Contents Of The Container, with the focus on the need to release the contents for balance, are: ". . .just to get it out, just to let it go" (50-year-old male); ". . .there's no emotional outlet. . . ." (56-year-old male); "You've got to finally get rid of it somehow" (71-year-old female). Sometimes the focus seems to be instead on the destruction of the container by its contents: ". . .the bottom still fell out" (55-year-old male, grief professional); "It's like the bottom has fallen out. . . ."(81-year-old female). And sometimes the sense is that too much has been released or emptied out by grieving: "To me [grief] is an empty feeling" (40-year-old woman); ". . .grieving has to do with emptiness. It's feeling empty" (56-year-old male, clergy); "To be prepared for a sudden emptiness. . . ." (55-year-old male, grief professional). In one instance the grieving seems to be thought of as the process of releasing emotion: ". . .grieving is a way of eliminating emotion. . . ." (56-year-old male).

There were five stretches of language, all by females, and four by one individual, in which the metaphor is Grieving Is A Burden. Though this metaphor can sometimes be a part of Grieving Is A Journey (Lakoff, 1993, p. 220), these instances do not seem to assume a movement, but focus on the weight of the burden on the person: ". . .he knew I could stand up under it," "You just shove it back," ". . .one way I know how to handle

grief" (73-year-old female); "And there was so much physical manifestation of heaviness. . . .(41-year-old female, clergy).

One final conventional conceptual metaphor found in four stretches of language, two female and two male, was "Grieving Is A Way Of Seeing." This derives from Knowing From A "Perspective" Is Seeing From A Point Of View (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 238):"The world looks different. The world is going to look a lot different for a long time"(55-year-old male, grief professional); "I guess [grieving] gives me eyes to see things I couldn't see anymore" (43-year-old female); "[Grieving is] soul searching. Like looking into one's self" (56-year-old male); "I know when my daughter died it felt like an immense blindness" (56-year-old female; clergy).

There were fourteen instances of novel or image metaphors in the interview discourse, nine used by females and five by males. Three of these were personifications of grieving: "Grief is a thing, an entity, that speaks to me" (41-year-old female, clergy); "Grief is sneaky" (43-year-old female); and "Grief is an entity in my life. It seems to have a life of its own" (56-year-old female, clergy). Three were instances of the same image metaphor: "I wasn't ready for the emotional roller coaster" (34-year-old woman); ". . .this has been like a roller coaster" (57-year-old woman); and "[Grieving] is a roller coaster" (58-year-old female, clergy). Two were instances of the same image metaphor used in two different parts of one interview, with a 50-year-old male: ". . .trying to put another brick upon a building that you're trying to build. . ." and "That expression [of grief] is the building block for happiness within me. . . ." Then there were six instances of single use

of novel metaphors: "And it's like grief being a herd. There's many, many cattle in a herd. You say, 'I've got a herd of cattle.' Well, that's kind of to me, that's what grief is. Grief is the accumulation and a combination of many, many things" (56-year-old male); "[Experiencing the death of someone you love is like] falling off a cliff. It's like falling without any sense of anybody being there to catch you or anything to stop you. No safety net" and:

> [Grieving is like] being in water, and swimming kind of against the current. And not even, in my case anyway, not even seeing the land. It mean it's like somebody dumped me out in the middle of a lake or ocean, and I can't see land and I'm trying to get there. And it's not that I'm drowning. It's just that I'm tired.
> (these two by the same 55-year-old male);

"[Grieving] is like a Magic Slate where you lift it up and the world can be like anything" (43-year-old female); "I would describe grieving as a rend or rip in the fabric of reality. Things are tattered and have to be woven back together again, maybe in new ways" and "Or maybe grief is like a cloud" (the last two by the same 41-year-old female, clergy).

Reflections

Soyland (1994) says, "Emotion is perhaps inconceivable without metaphor" (p. 91). This is certainly borne out by the language in the interviews under consideration.

The subjects literally could not speak about grieving without the use of conventional metaphor, metaphor they were using, for the most part, unconsciously; metaphor which mapped the physical onto the emotional. And, as has been noted, the conventional metaphors they used can easily be organized and grouped according to the categories of contemporary metaphor theory, specifically those of Lakoff and Johnson.

Beyond that broad observation, there are other points of interest in the data. Although the sample is too small to make a great deal of differences between male and female responses, and the numbers of males and females in the sample are not equal, there is, nevertheless, one instance in which there does seem to be a difference that might have validity and another that is at least worth noting. The first is in the metaphors grouped under "Grieving Is Work" or "Grieving Is A Problem To Be Solved." This is the only category in which male subjects were more represented than female subjects; fourteen of the twenty-three stretches of language in which these metaphors were found were spoken by male subjects, and this is spite of the fact that, in both the first and second interviews, more females than males were used as subjects. The unusually large representation of males may be a result of one of the differences in male and female grieving styles. Stroebe and Schut (1999), in their proposal of a "dual process" model of coping with bereavement, discuss evidence of gender differences in grieving, including a tendency of females to want to share feelings while grieving as opposed to a tendency of males to learn how to solve the problems of grief (p. 13). If indeed males tend to see grieving as problem-oriented, we might expect them to use metaphors that describe grieving this way.

It is evident from the interviews that the combining of conventional metaphors for grieving is a common language feature. Examples are combining Grieving Is Response To Losing A Possession with Grieving Is The Healing Of A Wound: ". . .that's a painful loss. . . ."; combining Grieving Is The Healing of A Wound with Grieving Is A Process: ". . .that's part of the healing process" and ". . .grief and the healing process"; combining Grieving Is A Process with Grieving Is Traveling Through A Passageway: . . .getting through the grieving process" and ". . .the process the family had to go through"; and combining three metaphors, Grieving Is Work, Grieving Is A Process, and Grieving Is Traveling Through A Passageway: "They kind of work through that whole process."

When it comes to the use of novel or image metaphors by the subjects, several observations can be made. A number of the novel metaphors can be seen as imaginative extensions of conventional metaphors. To say that grief is "like a cloud," for example, could be an extension of Grieving Is A Way of Seeing, in that, in this instance, grieving keeps the bereaved person from seeing, is like a cloud that impedes a clear view. The "Magic Slate" metaphor could also be a way of talking about seeing—grieving erases what was on the slate and gives you a blank page to look at where "the world can be like anything." The man who used the two "Grieving is building an edifice" metaphors was perhaps "building"imaginatively on the concept that Grieving Is Work, the work in this case being the act of putting "another brick upon a building" or using the expression of grief as a "building block" for what the subject describes as "happiness"—life on the other side of grieving. To say that grieving is a "rend or rip in the fabric of reality" is to

expand on the Grieving Is A Physical Force Metaphor. In this case the physical force, that which tears, is the death of the loved one, the rip is the result of that death, grief; and the statement that "things. . .have to be woven back together again, maybe in new ways" describes the recovery from the death, the work of the grieving. (And I hope you are as aware as I am that I cannot discuss these metaphors about grieving without constantly using metaphor myself!)

The roller coaster metaphor, used by three individuals, could be seen as a playful use of the metaphor Grieving Is A Journey; in this case, "Grieving is a journey on an amusement park ride." The specific image, of course, that is being mapped, is the "up and down" nature of the ride, which corresponds to the emotional "ups and downs" (which is, again, metaphorical: Good Is Up, Bad Is Down) of grieving. This is a good example of how a novel or image metaphor maps only one or some of the characteristics of the source domain, not all. No one would want to say that grieving is fun, nor that it is an activity that people choose, though both could be said of a ride on a roller coaster.

The three metaphors that personify grief do much the same thing. They map onto the domain of grieving three characteristics of a person: a person speaks (as grieving may speak to the griever, giving them insight or wisdom); a person can be sneaky (as grieving is sneaky in that it comes unexpectedly and can "sneak up on you" again and again); a person has a "life of [their] own," (as grieving seems to have a life of its own, not in the control of the griever).

The "herd" metaphor is a novel metaphor that maps the image of a herd of cattle onto grieving. In this instance, it is the number of cattle in a herd that is being linked to the number of facets of grief: "There's many, many cattle in a herd. .Grief is the

accumulation and a combination of many, many things." In other words, to speak of a herd of cattle is to speak of a number of entities in one entity; to speak of grief is to speak of many emotions and events and call all of them "grief."

Two of the novel metaphors are long enough and detailed enough to almost be stories. They were used by the same male subject, in the same interview, each in response to a separate "complete the sentence" question, one about what the death of a loved one is like, one about what grieving is like. Both are images that draw on physical experience. One, "Grieving is being in water" uses the Grieving Is A Container metaphor, but expands on it extensively, bringing in as the subject goes along Grieving Is A Physical Force, Grieving Is A Way Of Seeing, Grieving Is A Journey, and Grieving Is Work. In this metaphor the griever is pictured as being in water; swimming "against the current," "not even seeing the land." The griever has been "dumped out" in the water (a personification of grief) and is trying to get to land, but is "tired." It's a powerfully descriptive combination of metaphors, woven together into a story of grieving

The other is not as lengthy, but is also based in the primary metaphor Emotional States Are Physical States. In this image, the griever is pictured as "Falling off a cliff. . .without any sense of anybody being there to catch you or anything to stop you." The physical sensations of being unstable, without support and in danger of injury are mapped onto the emotional sensations of grieving, in which the bereaved person feels "like the bottom has fallen out" (to employ another metaphor used by several subjects) and therefore feels unsteady, alone, fearful, ungrounded, all due to the dramatic change caused by the death of a loved one.

My expectation, at the beginning of this research, was that more novel metaphors would be elicited by the direct approach of the "complete this sentence" questions, which were asked at the end of each interview. That was indeed true. The majority of the novel metaphors used were used in response to those questions. The metaphors in the first set of interviews, when the subjects were asked to talk about their need for silence or speech in grieving, were, with only a very few exceptions, conventional conceptual metaphors, metaphors the subjects used without, usually, being conscious that they were metaphors. This is also true of the metaphors in the beginning sections of the second interviews, when I asked subjects to simply describe to me what grieving was like or how they would tell someone else about it. It was when I asked them to use a "word or a phrase or an image" to complete the sentences "The death of someone you care about is like. . . ." and "Grieving is like. . . ." that many of them understood that I was looking for metaphorical language, and therefore consciously used novel metaphors. However, as is indicated by the relatively small number of novel metaphors used, not everyone responded in that way to the questions intended to elicit metaphor. In fact, only seven subjects out of the fourteen who were given the "complete the sentence" questions used novel metaphors in response to them. The others either used conventional conceptual metaphors to respond—i.e., "It's a loss" or "It's a wound"—or they used language that was descriptive, but not metaphorical, such as "It's never-ending," "It's something you've never experienced before" or "It was the worst day of my life."

Though, again, this is a very small sample to derive many truths from, there could be two possibilities here. One is that the people who responded with conventional metaphors when asked to complete the sentences were transferring those metaphors from

their unconscious to their conscious, recognizing in this context, as they had possibly not recognized earlier as they were speaking, that their talk of grieving as a "wound" or as a "loss" was, in fact, metaphorical. Another possibility is that there are simply some people who think more imaginatively than others. Perhaps, though all of us use conceptual, conventional metaphor constantly without thinking about its metaphorical origins and implications, some of us are more likely than others to consciously choose to use language that maps an image from one domain onto another, to consciously talk about "one thing in terms of another." A number of possible reasons for such differences come to mind: education, family of origin, geographical language or dialect features, context of discourse, etc.

In addition, of the nine total people, in all interviews, who used novel metaphor, five were either clergy or people who had received a fairly extensive amount of training in working with those who are bereaved as well as a "biblical-literary education" of sorts. So it could be that familiarity with the language used "in the field", with the entailments of the grieving process, or with symbolic language could have influenced their use of metaphors.

Another dynamic in the use of novel metaphors was that of the building of or on metaphors by subjects who spoke in each other's presence. Five of the subjects interviewed were interviewed, both times, as part of a group. They are members of a support group that has met together for around fifteen years, and they were interviewed in the context of a group meeting. Particularly in the second interview, when questions aimed at eliciting metaphor were being asked, it was clear that the subjects "played off"

of each other's comments. For instance, when one subject ended her response by talking about grief being "painful," the next began by saying grieving is an "ache." The next person to talk began on a different note, but ended her turn by reiterating the "ache" motif: "The acuteness of grief gets less, gets more like an ache." Later on, a subject ended a stretch of language by talking about "so much physical pain" and the next person to respond began, "Sometimes when I feel real pain like that I just want to cry." When one compared grief to "almost something as organic as a disease," another, a little later, said, "You know, grief is sneaky. That's where the disease model breaks down. It's not gradual and progressive like healing." After one subject described grieving as "like a Magic Slate where you lift it up and the world can be like anything," several turns later another subject said, "I think people with a faith stance can do the Magic Slate thing easier." And, finally, when one subject said that grief "also sometimes opens up your being," the next person to speak said, "Grief seems to me like a hollowing out. . . . It opens us up, empties a place that can actually open to joy." (These group interviews can be found in Appendix A.)

So it is clear that these women helped each other find apt metaphors to describe their experiences. A metaphor proposed by one was expanded by another, given additional shape and meaning and nuance. This is similar to what psychologists and psychiatrists do when they pick up on metaphors used by their clients and encourage the clients to employ them to "access, as well as symbolize, emotions that may have been previously unexpressed, unexplored, or even unrecognized" (Lyddon, Clay & Sparks, 2001, p. 3). Not only was language use influenced by other members of the group; the learning and change that metaphor can facilitate was likely furthered by the conversation as well.

It is interesting to consider the metaphors used by the subjects in light of what is known about how people grieve. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969) is, of course, considered the mother of the idea that there are "stages" involved in grieving. Her stages of dying (Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance) were later superimposed, by herself and others, onto the process of grieving, with the idea that the grieving person is dealing with a loss in much the same way that a dying person is dealing with a loss. In the years since Kubler-Ross first delineated these stages, many have taken her to task, particularly for the implication that every dying or grieving person goes, or must go, through all five of these stages in this particular order (see Shneidman, 1982, among others). However, when the "lock-step" idea is taken out of the formula, most grief professionals today agree that the stages give a helpful overall picture of what a grieving person might feel at one time or another during the time they grieve, emphasizing that the feelings are not stages one goes through and then is done with forever, but feelings that can recur at any time. (One way of describing the "stages" is Rodebaugh, Schwindt and Valentine's (1999) "reeling, feeling, dealing, and healing" (p. 1), another is Deits' (1988) "Shock and Numbness, Denial and Withdrawal, Acknowledgement and Pain, and Adjusting and Renewal," but there are many, many more.)

There are a number of ways in which the metaphors the subjects used relate to the "stages" of grieving. It is possible, in fact, that the metaphor "Grieving Is A Process," in which grieving is seen to have parts, or stages, is a result of the influence of Kubler-Ross and her stages theory, that subjects' use of the metaphor is in part because of their having

heard of the idea of "stages" of grieving. Beyond that, many of the metaphors are descriptive of the stages, or feelings, of grief as grief professionals have named them.

The most commonly used conceptual, conventional metaphor was some form of Grieving Is A Journey, which would indicate that the subjects recognize, in retrospect (most of them were speaking about deaths that had happened at least a year earlier and sometimes much longer ago than that), that grief was and is both varied and long, a winding path with obstacles and detours along the way.

The second most frequently used conceptual metaphor was Grieving is Response To Loss Of A Possession. Again, it would make sense that the subjects, looking back over their grieving from some distance, would be very aware of what they had lost and how they were adjusting to living with that loss. The shock and the pain lessen, but the loss never goes away.

Because the pain is, at least early in grieving, quite significant, though, it is not surprising that the metaphor "Grieving Is Recovery From A Wound" was the third most commonly used by the subjects. They were remembering the hurt of early grieving and the comfort offered to them by others. Their talk about "healing" was their way of saying they have moved on, or are moving on, past the early hurt. The same might be said for the metaphor used fourth most often, "Grieving Is A Physical Force." The first stages of grieving are described in grief literature in terms of this metaphor—shock, numbness (caused by the physical force of extreme cold), feeling dazed (as if hit by a force or object). But those feelings go away. They are remembered later, but from the perspective of what has occurred since.

When the metaphors used by those whose grief experience was three years or more in the past are compared to those with more recent grief, some correlation to the stages of grieving is perhaps also indicated. Those who were at least three years away from the death of a loved one used the Grieving Is Work/ Grieving Is A Problem To Solve metaphor significantly more than did those with more recent grief experiences, and the metaphor Grieving Is A Way Of Seeing was used only by those at least three years past a death. In addition, the metaphors Grieving Is Traveling Through A Passageway, Grieving Is A Stopping Place Or Detour On Life's Journey, Grieving Is A Container, and Grieving Is A Process were used somewhat more often by those farther past the experience of death. Perhaps these ways of looking a grieving are most likely to occur "from a distance," when the bereaved person has some perspective on the event and is more aware of how it fits into her or his life as a whole. Conversely, the metaphor Grieving Is An Obstacle On The Journey was used significantly more often by subjects who were less than three years from the grief experience, and Grieving Is Healing Or Response To A Wound Or Disease and Grieving Is Response To A Physical Force were used somewhat more often by them. These metaphors seem descriptive of the more immediate effects of the death of a loved one: an obstacle you can't get or even see around, a painful wound, a physical blow.

Considering several of the individual subjects who were interviewed twice, six year apart, also gives some indication of the changing "stages" of the grieving process. A female (67 in her first interview; 73 in her second) was interviewed the first time twenty years after the death of her first husband. However, a little less than three years before the second interview, her second husband died. Her second interview, much

closer to an experience of grieving, shows nine instances of the metaphor Grieving Is Healing Or Response To A Wound as compared to none in her first interview; eight instances of Grieving Is Response To A Loss as compared to two; and no instances of Grieving Is Traveling Through A Passageway as compared to three. For this subject, it would seem that the more recent grief experience has made the pain and loss of grieving more apparent and has lessened the ability to see the grief as something that is gone through, something one "come out on the other side" of.

Another female, 57 in her first interview two years after the death of her husband, and 63 in the second, used the Grieving Is An Obstacle On The Journey metaphor twice in the first interview and not at all in the second, and the Grieving Is Work/A Problem To Solve metaphor three times in the second interview and not at all in the first. For her, the "obstacle I can't get around" view of grieving seems to have given way to the idea that grieving is something she is working on, a problem she is solving.

A male who was 50 in the first interview and 56 in the second at the first interview had lost a sister two years before and a brother twenty-five years before, both to cancer. In the time between the interviews his parents (who were also subjects in the first interviews) both died. This subject used the Grieving Is Response To A Loss metaphor ten times in the second interview, but only once in the first, and the Grieving Is Traveling Through A Passageway metaphor twice in the second interview and none in the first. This suggests both an awareness of the "going throughness" that might be due to the passage of more time since his sister's death (he reported being closer to his sister than to his brother or his parents) but also an increase in the sense of loss because of the number of close deaths he has now experienced.

Finally, a male, 49 in the first interview and 55 in the second, who is a grief professional but has also experienced the death of his wife, was interviewed first two years after her death. His second interview, eight years after her death, shows nine instances of the use of the Grieving Is Response To A Loss metaphor as compared to three in the first interview; eight instances of the Grieving Is Traveling Through A Passageway metaphor as compared to three; eight instances of Grieving Is Work/A Problem To Solve as compared to none; six instances of Grieving Is A Process compared to none; and no uses of Grieving Is An Obstacle On The Journey as compared to four in the first interview. The six intervening years seem to have given him a greater sense of what he has lost, an awareness that grief is something you "go through" and come out of, something you work at, and a process that unfolds over time. At the same time, he seems no longer as concerned that grieving is something you have to "get around," an obstacle in the way. (Note: the interviews discussed above are the first sets of interviews included in Appendix A.)

So the interviews do show that these subjects, at least, seem to go through stages in their grieving. They also support the idea that these stages are not in any particular order, but that grievers move back and forth through some or all of them as they experience their grief.

One final significant characteristic of the second set of interviews was that the same phenomenon of the need to "tell a story" that happened during the first set of interviews also happened during the second. Again, most subjects seemed to have some particular

aspect of grieving that they wanted to talk about, no matter what my questions were. They answered the questions, but managed to talk about their concerns in and around their answers. And, in several cases, subjects interviewed twice wanted to talk about the same concerns both times, even though six years had intervened! The man who wanted to talk about how people "fake" grieving the first time still wanted to talk about it. The man who talked in the first interview about what it was like to grieve in a new community, without a network of friends, talked abut that in the second interview as well. The woman whose concern in the first interview was that no one wanted to listen to her talk about her grieving, that people wanted her to "get over it," was still voicing that concern six years later. Both of the women who had lost infant daughters told the stories of those losses in both interviews, even though the babies died 40-50 years ago. So it seems that, at least for some people, both interviews provided a chance to talk about something that they needed to talk about, to express feelings about grieving that they needed to express, to tell stories they needed to tell, and retell. My guess is that, interviewed six years from now, or twelve years from now, they would still be voicing the same concerns and telling the same stories. Our culture simply doesn't give them many opportunities to talk about grieving.

Epilogue: A Look To The Future

There are several aspects of this study on grieving that might merit further research. One is a further look at differences in male and female grieving. Is there a significant difference is the grieving styles of women and men, in their needs for speech and/or silence in grieving, in the metaphors they use when they talk about it? Do women talk more about their grief? Are men in general more problem-oriented in their approach to grieving? Do they tend to see much of what our culture does around grieving as false, insincere? Age differences might also be explored. Except for the one 17-year-old in the first set of interviews, I interviewed no one younger than 34. This was in part because it is more difficult to find subjects in their twenties who have had experiences of grieving. But some have, and it would interesting to know if they talk about it any differently than their elders. Another area of possible exploration would be a more comprehensive look at the ways in which the time elapsed since the death of a loved one influences what the subject says about her/his need for speech or silence and her/his metaphor use.

And, finally, are there differences in the ways we talk about grieving and the ways we write about it? A recent New York Times article (Smith, 2001) considered the consolation people have been finding in poetry following the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. The article quotes Billy Collins, U.S. poet laureate, as saying that "in times of crisis. . . .[w]hat we want to hear is a human voice speaking directly in our ear"(p.2) and that we find this in poetry. It might be important to look at

how we write about grieving in poetry, as well as in prose. What metaphors do we use when we write about bereavement? Are they different from the ones we use in speech, and, if so, how are they different? How do we, in the medium of the written word, tell the stories of our grieving and comfort ourselves and each other?

These are questions for another day, but they are, I think, worth considering. To do so is to journey toward understanding our own minds and spirits through understanding the language we use, and when and how we choose to use it.

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APPENDIX A: SAMPLE INTERVIEWS

Interview: 67-year-old female

I: I'm trying to look at what kinds of needs people in our culture have for either talking or silence in grieving situations. So, if you just have some memories from you own experience—both right away when you found out your husband had died, and later---whether you needed to talk or needed to just be quiet, those kind of things.

S: Well, first, we knew this was an inevitable occurrence. The last time I took him to the hospital I went, just me and him. I didn't want to be with anybody else. I just wanted to be with him and not share him with anybody, because we knew that more than likely he wouldn't be coming home. And you think you're prepared for these things. Like I said, we knew for a long time. And we talked about it and he talked about what he wished I'd do, go on with my life and things. And he was satisfied with it. The children were grown, and I was pretty self-sufficient. And he wasn't afraid. So—but when it was actually down to it—you think you're prepared, but you're not. And it's a terrible thing. The worst thing I've gone through, I believe. I lost my father, lost my mother, lost a sister, and then him. But there was nothing---when I lost my relatives, I had him. When I lost him, even though my children were there, they were grieving, too. But I guess what I needed right after he passed away, I wanted just to be alone. I had a lot of friends. I had former pastors and present pastors that I could call on. But I just wanted to be alone, with my memories. I had good memories. There were no bad memories. And I clung to those. And I kept trying to remember what he told me—that he wanted me to go on with my life, and find someone—I was forty—in my forties—that I was young. I tried to remember what he told me, kept that close to me all the time. Our children were grown and they were a comfort to me, but they had their own lives. I had a sister-in-law that I was very close to and she understood how I felt. She didn't push me. She just was there, let me know she was there. His relatives let me know they were there. And that was really all I needed, to know that they were there.

I: You didn't really need to talk?

S: No. No, I didn't. I really didn't need to talk. He had a niece that was a very caring person, very sensitive. She came to me and asked if I would object if she made pictures. To me it was ghoulish. But I said, "If you want to." She said, "Well, you may want them. If you don't, you don't ever have to look at them. But it's something you can't go back." And she did make the pictures and to me it made it more real that he was gone. If often think about this. I'm not ashamed of it or anything. I don't tell everybody. But I had an aunt that was with me when I went back to the cemetery. And I felt like I just wanted to literally dig into the grave and get with him. And that was terrible. It was terrible. I just couldn't let go. One thing that helped me after a time, after my family had left—I wanted to see him. I wanted to see him so bad. So I asked this niece if she would bring the

pictures. And even though I had touched him in the casket, and to me I still feel that was the best thing to do, touch him, realize that that's not them, but I still wanted to see him again. And the pictures helped. And he looked so at peace. And he had a smile on his face. And to be in as great as pain as he was, it was just kind of a relief that he was out of the pain. Later on—it was a long time—and this is something I would never do again. I would never have a service in my church, for any of my relatives. It was a long time before I could go back to church. It was hard. But, like I said, our pastor at that time, he was very understanding and very compassionate. He didn't push. He'd come out to see me and just visit, not talk about grief or anything, just visit. And then eventually I began to come out of it, come back into the church where I belonged. It takes time. Sure does. But I don't think I would ever do that again. Because it's hard to go back.

I: Do you remember very much about what other people's responses were to you? Like when other people came to see you? Whether they talked a lot, or mostly were just there and quiet?

S: They talked quite a bit. About memories. He was a jolly type person. He was kind of—they talked about things he'd done for them when they were young, silly things. And I didn't know him back then, you now. Mostly they just talked about their memories of him. One thing I'm glad they didn't do—they did not say, you know, he's better off. My sister-in-law came and helped take care of his clothes. That was hard, but we did it as soon as we possibly felt like we could. But I know people—they really don't know what to say at the time of a death. And I look back, you know, when I went through it with other people, I tried to remember how I was comforted, what was the best thing said to me, and what I resented them saying to me. And it makes you a little more sensitive.

I: So were there some things that people said that you resented?

S: Well, there were a few things. Like, "Oh, you'll get over it." You know, "You'll go ahead with your life, and you'll do this. . . ." At that time I did not need to hear that. At the time I resented that.

I: Not ready to think about that yet.

S: No. I didn't think I ever would. Most people feel the same way. They really don't want you to say, "Oh, you'll get over. It'll pass." Because they don't feel that.

I: You were saying that you feel like it's made you sensitive to other people. What do you do when you go to see someone else who's had a loss? Do you find yourself going and talking or just going and being there but not saying very much?

S: I just go to be there mostly. I don't talk very much. I just tell them that I'm sorry and if there's anything I can do to help them to call

I: So it's more like just being there is important.

S: Yes. It was to me.

I: There are some cultures.....Job, etc. Do you think we have anything that corresponds to that in our culture, or are we mostly just people who talk and we don't pay any attention to those kind of things?

S: I think we, well, I think there's a time when they should be encouraged to talk about it. But I think we need to be a little more sensitive about how they feel, and not how we feel, or not exactly what we would want, because everybody has different feelings. Now, in my case, I didn't want anybody to talk to me about it. Some people feel like they want to talk and get it all out. So I think we have to kind of be sensitive to their feelings, and how they feel. Some people want to talk about the deceased person, and some people don't. And I think most of them don't want to talk about the future. I made a bad move because I got in a hurry. I sold my farm. I had some good Christian friends who told me, "Just wait." But I wanted to make a move. I was restless. Had I waited until I met my present husband, everything would have been better. That's the mistake some people make. At that time they're still in grief and they just want to do something. They're restless. They want to make a move. And sometimes they make a mistake. Not always, but sometimes.

I: What do you think about the funeral customs and other customs in our culture when people are grieving? Do you feel like those are adequate customs, or did we used to have better ones a long time ago and we got rid of them, or how do you feel?

S: No. I think the customs we have now are better than they were in the past.

I: Okay. In what way?

S: Well, not that these are things I remember, but these are things I've read about and heard about. For instance, my older sister, when her husband passed away, she was going by his wishes and he wanted to be laid out at home and people come and see him at home. I didn't think that was good, because, in the first place, I wasn't comfortable. And then she always had that memory of him being there and if affected her peace. And another thing I've read about , heard about, where people would sit up all night. Maybe they had an idea they were watching his spirit, her spirit. I don't know what the reason was. But, I don't now, I just like the customs we have now. They're more soothing They're more relaxed. Like, when we have a service, people come in and they greet each other and they give their condolences, and then they go on and kind of get relaxed, and it makes it more comfortable for the grieving, I think.

I: It's not as formal?

S: Right. It's not as formal as it used to be. Used to you'd go into a service and you feel like you should be really down no matter what's in your heart. You may feel that in your heart, but I think we should kind of have an uplift attitude. Because after I got over the

first part of my grief I felt like, well, now he's. . . .After I got over the initial hard grief, I'd think about him and I'd think, well, he's in heaven. And so he can still watch over me. And at times I felt like I was real close to him. And, for me, I was sad for myself. Because I had lost a part of me I felt. And when I looked at the picture, with his smile, I felt like, well, he's not sad. So, if we can get through that—that's normal, that's to be expected—but once we get through that we can look back and it's a comfort. And I can talk about him with my second husband. I don't go into my grieving part, really, but I can talk about things that we did and things that he wanted. But it was a terrible time. But what to tell people when they're grieving, I don't know. Like I said, for me it was just be there and not push anything on them, just be there.

Interview: 73-year-old female

I: The last time that we did the interview I was asking you some questions about whether you thought you preferred to be alone and silent when you were grieving or if you liked to talk. So we talked about that awhile. But today what I want to talk about more is just kind of your description of what grieving is like, what you remember about what it's like, what it feels like, what kinds of things you would say to describe it.

S: Well, the being alone and being lonesome. You go to bed at like and you're there by yourself and when I'm grieving it's just like my heart is just—it's broken in two. The companionship that I miss is terrible. We were so close. You know, I watch videos that I made of him and it doesn't make me sad. It helps me, makes me feel better. He was a jolly type of person, and it makes me laugh. So for me that's part of the healing process, really. And we can miss him and wish he was here, but. . . .But the being alone and you want to be with the one that you lost so bad. It hurts---like I said, it's the heart. It just feels like it's broken in two. And you pray that God will heal it. The best feeling I've had has been with my friends, and with children. I like children. I don't know why with me that children have such a comfort to me. He loved children, too. But, anyhow. . There's future there.

I: If you were going to share some of your wisdom with, say, somebody younger who'd not ever gone through grieving, and you were trying to explain to them---I know everybody's grieving is different---but you were kind of trying to prepare them for what it might be like, what might you say about what they could expect?

S: Well, first off, they might expect deepest heartache that you can ever experience. And sometimes you might even feel like you wouldn't care if you went, if you knew that you could be with that one that died. You just want that person back so bad. You want to hold them and be close to them. It's something you don't think you'll ever get over. But it gets better. The first time, I met someone else. At the time you don't think you will, that nobody can take the place of that one But sometimes it happens. It still doesn't

replace the other one, but there's a comfort. When you lose the new one, you're older and you don't take it as well. And then you really don't feel like you have anything to live for. You have to work at it. You have to pray a lot. And you have to depend on God to help you. And He will. Sometimes it feels like He's a way off. But, anyway, He's here. But you can expect a lot of heartache and a lot of tears. But they dry up. I don't know, now, I'm expecting to lose my son. They say, "Well, you never expect to lose a child, because you expect to go first." But those things happen, too. Right now I'm grieving for him. And when it happens, which it will, you can't imagine, before you lose someone you can't imagine what it's going to be like. People can talk about it, but, even though they have been through it, it's an individual grief. So I really don't know how I will feel. Everyone grieves, I think, in a different way. Outwardly people may seem one way, but we don't know what happens in their private times.

I: That kind of leads into the next thing I was going to ask you. When other people, when you remember hearing other people talk about their own grieving, do you remember any ways that they describe it?

S: Well, the one I talked to, one lady, they felt like they just wanted to go immediately. If they knew that they could be with them physically, that's what they'd want. But if they knew that they could be with them, they would just want to go. This one particular lady, in public she seemed to be doing better than I felt I guess. And you don't know when you see people how they're doing in their grief. You think, "Well, they're just fine." But you don't know that. But I've heard them say that, "Well, I still miss the one that died. But I'm going on with my life. It's hard, but I have to do it." And that's true. You have to go on. You can't just withdraw within yourself. I think you'd just wither away if you did. If I just sat here and looked at TV and read, I wouldn't be any use to anybody, even myself. But I still think everybody grieves different. But I don't know if you ever really get over it completely. It think it gets better. And you'll see things and do things that remind you of the one that died. You may be all right and then you'll see something that just brings it all back. So I think grief goes on and on. I don't think it ever really stops.

I: Since one of the things I'm interested in is the language, the words that people use when they describe grieving, I was going to ask if you'd just do one of those "Complete the sentence" things for me. So, what I want you to do is just come up with a word or phrase, or even a picture or image, that kind of completes this thought: Experiencing the death of someone you care about it like. . . .

S: Really it's kind of like dying, because part of you has died

I: And this is another one sort of like that: The experience of grieving is like .

S: It's never-ending, I know that. It's—well. . . . It's like nothing you've ever felt before. And it's different than anyone else's grieving. Each individual grieves differently. It's not like—well, when I lost my loved one—you don't walk in their shoes.

You have your own shoes. To me I have lost anything, everything I always lived for. He was my life. I think you've lost part of yourself.

I: Is there any other experience in life that you could compare with grieving? You said dying; it's sort of like dying. Is there any other?

S: Uh—well, I can't—I can't think of anything that it's like. I lost my mother, and that was bad. And I lost my sisters, and it's bad. But still different. When my daughter almost died, that was next to worse thing that happened.

I: So the only thing it's like is other grieving.

S: That's right.
I:You talked a little bit about the funeral home. Do you remember any things that they said about grieving, or anything their publications said?

S: I don't recall that. Sometimes the newsletters bring things back. They really do.

I: So you relive some of the feelings?

S: You really do.

I: And you're not sure if that's good?

S: I'm not sure.

I: A minute ago you talked about healing. What is that like? What does it feel like to be healing?

S: Well, now I can go and do and put flowers on the grave and talk to him and it doesn't seem as bad. I can think about him. But, you know what, I don't remember if it was something I read or something I saw on TV. They were talking about the body decaying. And, as far as my husband, I just hadn't pictured that. And it hurt. I know he had a soul. We all do. And the body does decay. But I had just blocked that, I think, out of my mind. I hadn't thought about it. You want to think of being lifted up whole. And I know it isn't that way, but you just don't think of it. And I don't know if the grieving process is long and each individual is different. People grieve in different ways, but they all hurt. And they all have heartache.

Interview: 57-year-old female

I: What I want to talk about has to do with, first your own experience of what you needed in grief situations in your life as far as talking to people or not talking, speech or silence—just kind of what your feelings were about that, both right after someone died and then later. So, if you could talk about that. . . .

S: Well, it's been a two-year journey for me, well it will be two years the end of this month. And I've been, this has been like a rollercoaster. Sometimes I need to talk, sometimes I need silence, sometimes I need people to just talk to me, and other times—I guess silence means that they need to listen to me talk. And sometimes I'm real jabbery. And sometimes I catch myself just telling way more than anybody would want to hear. And I don't know that I could say that I have an answer. Of course I'm on the other side of things. I encounter people, especially now, whose husbands have died recently. Or maybe I'll say something about it and they'll say, "Yes, my husband died a few years ago." And then they want to tell their story. And so I'm sometimes on the other side of that. And I've experienced the range of reactions, too. Do I have time to listen to this? What am I supposed to say? There isn't any answer that I've been able to come up with. It's different things at different times. Sometimes—well, I've sort of learned to expect different things from different people, too. Some people are just better listeners and it doesn't matter what the subject is. And some people always have encouraging words or advice or something like that.

I: So you kind of learn to go to the people who you know give you what you need, then?

S: I guess. Seems like there's never enough. I'm not even sure myself what I need. One thing that I'm missing, that I really—I realize just looking back on my life that I've just generally always had a buddy,. someone that I was in contact with on a daily basis either in the work place, for coffee breaks and lunch, or since I haven't worked walking, or something. I've usually had a buddy in my life. And this runs its course and changes, usually due to some life-altering event. People move, people quit, things change in their lives. Well, I don't have a buddy now. And I find that I can't be buddies with a married couple. I have a friend that I've been disappointed that we're not better buddies because I really do enjoy her company very much. And I turn to her a lot. And she's there to me, but not on a daily basis. I can't call her daily. She's just too busy. She has---she's a married woman, and she has other friends, and her husband is her best buddy. Like mine was in a lot of ways. But I had a friend that I walked with every day for years and we talked and she calls me and tells me how much she misses that and needs it, and that she was never in better health physically or mentally as during those years. But yet her life changed because her grown son and three grandchildren came to live with her. Three little bitty grandchildren. And right now I don't have a buddy. I know some women that I can chat with once in a while, but there's nobody on a daily basis that I have available to me. And it hadn't occurred to me until just this week that that was a newly different---a problem for me. And, as far as the other persons, like you, whenever we do have a time, it seems like that what you do is helpful, the information that you've shared with

me and also you just listening. And that seems to be—whatever takes place in the moment is very helpful.

I: If you can think back to the first few days after your husband died, or even maybe just the first few hours, or even in other times, other grief situations in your life---do you remember whether your first instincts were to want to talk, or to want to be quiet, or what you needed from other people?

S: I don't know what I was doing. I do remember wanting to run around and tell everybody. I had---there's friends of mine that live not too far down the road here, and they walk around town a lot. And I really like those people. And they always, when they'd see me out and about, always , "How are things going with you and your husband? Is your husband better?" They seemed to really want to know where we were in that struggle. And when he died, we were heading, I was in the car with someone else, and I saw them walking down the road. I think it was the next day. And I said, "Oh, stop. I've got to talk to them." And we stopped and rolled down the window, and I said, "Oh, I have to tell you that my husband died last night." Well, I think that made them feel so bad. I don't know that that was the right thing for me to have done, but I wanted to tell people that I thought were interested that he had died. I don't know why. I just needed to do that. And people were really kind of taken aback by it. I don't know that we have very good laws of common courtesy and consideration surrounding this.

I: You thought people didn't know how to deal with it?

S: No. I could've said, "I'm engaged to be married." And they would have known what to say. Or, "I'm gonna have an operation." I don't know. I don't guess there is any other news that is so drastic. It's hard to compare it to other situations where we have social courtesies that we extend to one another. People have been, by and large, very nice about, at least one time, saying, "I'm so sorry that your husband died. I know it's really hard for you." And that—most everybody knows how to say that. Beyond that, most people don't know. And I don't either. And I don't know what I need most of the time. It seems like that, you know, just anything is better than nothing.

I: So, for somebody to say anything to you is better?

S: Anything. Talk or listen, whatever. Anything is better than nothing.

I: And nothing would be just not even being---

S: Let's don't mention it. Let's don't talk about it. Let's steer clear of her because she might bring it up. And that happens, too. And there's only one person that's said really a very hurtful thing to me, you know, that I can recall now. This was in a situation where people were dealing with grief, the loss of relationships I was the only one dealing with loss through death. These other people were dealing with loss through divorce. This woman had been through really a tragic divorce. And she's really very angry. And she was very happily married and she thought everything was going fine and all of a sudden

he just fell in love with someone else. And he just went—I mean he's still in love with that new person. And she lost him and lost her—they were in business together and she lost her business. She just lost everything. And, anyway, she said to me that she thought I was lucky that my husband had died, that she wished that hers had died. That really hurt. But, you know, I did not—she wouldn't have lost her company if he had died. So her loss wouldn't have been as great in some ways. But that really was a very hurtful thing for her to say. Because I don't feel a bit lucky. And twenty years ago I did divorce my husband. And I remember the pain and hurt of all of that mess. And, looking back, how foolish it was, the whole thing. But still, it was very painful, and not a bit like I had anticipated that it would be. But, still I like it better than I like this. Calling my husband up and fighting with him was a lot more pleasant than not being able to call him up at all. Just screaming at him one way. My depression continues to be basic. People are ready for me to be over this.

I: I think that's a pretty common thing in our culture, for other people to be ready for someone to be over grief before the person themselves is.

S: It may be different for others. I have met two men recently whose wives died after struggles---you know, a long struggle with cancer or something. And both of them married again within a year. And seem very content. It's so hard for me to understand that. I don't know. I think it's easier maybe for women to marry a man that's not really there. And, I don't know. I don't know who these women are that married these men that are still---I don't understand it. I just can't---One of them is my boss and one of them is just someone I know casually. My loneliness is just overwhelming. But I still can't find very much solace in that kind of thing. The time that I have spent with other men, it didn't work. It wasn't what I needed. It was just distracting, you know. But it certainly wasn't very fulfilling or satisfying.

I: Have you ever felt like in any of this time that you just wanted everyone to go away and you just wanted to be alone or be quiet, or have you mostly wanted to be around other people?

S: By and large it's with other people. I'm just kind of panicky and frantic. But there are other times when I've just had enough. I've had a couple of panic attacks for the first time in my life in big crowds. And, oh man, got to get out of there! And I was really happy to come home. Most of the time I don't—well, I just spent a long time dreading to come home. I hated to go anywhere because I hated to come home so bad. But I'm kind of over that, more or less. But I can remember all the years that I was married, my husband and I used to have a sort of little game. Neither one of us wanted to be the first one home. And I'd delay and delay and delay because I hated to come in to an empty house. And he'd do the same thing. And it finally just got so plum silly we had to stop it. Because, for one thing, our son was home alone sometimes. I can't remember if that went on very long but I do remember that. But I always hated to come---if I was expecting him to home and I got here and he wasn't here, I was always disappointed. And that was something I've just dealt with all these years. Now, though, time can just go by so fast. I don't call up somebody anymore to say, to ask for grief support I never

did use those words, but---I spent a lot of time before calling up someone and---well, actually my friends called me. There were three couples and we had kind of social life with those people. But we really enjoyed it. We celebrated---there was always a potluck at somebody's house on any holiday. And just Saturday nights. Well those couples stayed in very close contact with me. I'd say that first year one of those six persons called me every day. To the extent that I noticed it—there's a pattern here. Well, one of my other friends said something to them about it, how much I appreciated it, and then it stopped. And I really miss it. And they didn't just call up for grief. They called up, "Well, what are you doing? What'd you do today? What are you gonna do tomorrow?" And, you know, I was fairly free with it. I did go through a bad time where I was needing to talk a lot more. Sometime last fall. And I alienated one of the persons very much. She got very angry at me. I wanted to talk and I was frustrated by the lack of response and I pressed it. And so she knew that I was angry. She said that I said, "Well, all right. Just drop it. You don't understand anyway." It's hard for me to imagine hearing those words coming out of my mouth, but I was feeling very upset. Even if she paraphrased, she was probably pretty much right on target. Well that was hurtful to her. But, of course she doesn't understand. How could she? Her husband hasn't died. And I'm real jealous of these couples, that their futures are continuing to unfold for them in the way they had planned and hoped. But, here I am see. This is the kind of thing that I say to people. And---given half a chance.

I: And you don't think that's okay?

S: Well, sometimes it's not okay. They don't want to hear this. Well, it's burdensome to folks. It's not very pleasant. It can't be fun. And, I tell you what, I can't seem to stop it.

I: You still need to talk about it?

S: Oh, yeah. And, you know, I've caught myself recently talking to strangers. I was on the phone with someone that I needed some information from, and he was fascinated with the place I work, and we got into a conversation about that. And I happened to mention that my husband had died, and the guy said, "Well, okay. Thank you. I'll see you." And I'm thinking well what an awful thing to say to people. It just seems to natural to me.

I: What about when you go visit someone who's just had a death? What is your instinct when you go? Is it to just be there with that person and not really say anything, or do you feel like talking? What do you find yourself doing?

S: Well, my experience tells me to say as little as possible. I just say, I try to give them I hug. I try to give some touching need. I really miss that. And I try, I say, "I know this is really rough, and I'm very sad. I'm sorry." Just try to say as little as possible. I sure don't want to say to anybody, you know—"God's will," "I'm glad he's out of his misery," you know.

I: So just say a few things and then just be there with that person?

S: Yeah. Just try to get ahold of them. Sometimes they cry. If you hug somebody, sometimes they start to cry. And that's good. And people are pretty much numb at first. So, but, you know, I have to say something, so I just try to say as little as possible.

I: In some other cultures. . . (etc.) So what would you say about that in comparison with our society? Do we have anything like that, or do we just totally depend on other things?

S: Well, I'll tell you, when I break down and start to cry, you know, back through the last two years, when I really got, was overwhelmed, and started to cry, and sometimes just sob, I really needed somebody to reach out and touch me, get ahold of me, not just run around the room and bring me a Kleenex. But they seemed to think that when I did that they needed to retreat, that I needed privacy to cry. I didn't. I needed to cry on someone's shoulder. And they didn't need to say anything. Silence would have been wonderful. But presence, and not only presence but close presence. That may be just my own little world I live in, where I need physical contact with people. Maybe other people don't. My mother said it had to do with my being a twin. So the presence is---silent presence is profound. It's nice. Retreating happens but presence is, would be nice. If we had some rituals, some saying, okay, go sit silently with that person for seven days, that would be nice to have something that you could count on, even if you varied it.

I: So how do you feel about the customs and the rituals we have? Do we not have good enough rituals, you think, to deal with grieving situations?

S: Well, in this town, my church is really good about bringing food. We had food galore. In fact, we had to invite people to come and eat after everybody went home. And people were here by and large the good part of a week. Because of the fact that we didn't have my husband's body, we could delay the service for the convenience of traveling people. And also for, after I got hurt and had to go to the hospital. And I've wondered what it would have been like if I hadn't done that. That's a little different. I have read in books, though, that a lot of widows or widowers have accidents, right away sometimes. Sometimes they leave the hospital and fall down the steps or step out in front of a car or have a wreck on the way home. I fell and hurt myself and was in the hospital for a few days. But I had visitors. I had a steady stream of visitors. People seem to be more, seemed to be easier for them to visit me in the hospital than it was for them to come and spend time with me.

I: Like there was a reason?

S: Uh-huh. There's, you know, we do visit sick people better than we visit I think after death. Well, there's a future, there's a hope for us about it. We may not be that great at that, but we're better than what . . .I myself have trouble with it. I was better at it before my husband died than I am now, about going to someone when there's a death in the family.

I: Because it kind of hooks your own grief?

S: I don't know. So many things have changed about me that just astound me that I don't have a real understanding or insight on at this point. I think that may be it. But I do visit sick people that I visit after death.

I: So do you think it would be easier for people if we had some different rituals?

S: There's no way—I don't know. I don't know that there's any way to anticipate tragedy, plan for it. And that's what it is. I think a friend and I were talking about that yesterday. There's no way to plan for the terrible things that happen. Her husband just lost two of his sisters. He wasn't that close, but still, there is an attachment on some level. So I don't know—quiet is good sometimes. Silence is good sometimes and talk is good sometimes and there's nothing perfect.

I: Do you think, from your observation of other people, do you think that everybody needs some time for talk and sometime for quiet, or do you think people's personalities are a part of what they need?

S: Yeah, I think there's, you probably have a range there. In any one individual it may predominate on one side or another. My need to talk probably is predominant. I don't know. So therefore people that can listen in silence, it's very useful to me. And I do try to keep my radar up with people, how receptive they are to my talk. And sometimes even the people I rely on the most, they're just not in the mood today, or just, they've got other things on their mind and they need to have. Everybody's just not available to me all the time for anything.

I: Would you find it helpful, like, for example, if Hospice had different rules and you could go to a grief group for longer than a year? Do you think that would be something you would do?

S: I'd still be going. They have never been able to get that off the ground very good. Me and one other person were the only two that they've ever been very successful with. They had it in the daytime in one town and in the evening in another, so I went to both. And it was just me and one other person both places. Once in a while another person would come in around the edges. I found that I was very impatient with new people in the group. Well, we had a man for instance that came. His wife died and they got him to come. I got so impatient with him! He was saying things like, "Well, I don't see any point in talking about it. It's over and done with." And I'd say, "Well, why are you here?" "Well, I don't know. They seemed to think I should come." And I would end up getting really aggravated at that man, making these pronouncements. And he finally just quit coming. We ran him off, I guess! But there were two facilitators that were supposed to be trained, so I tried not to feel responsible for the group. It was their job. I think they were being paid. But, regardless, they were in charge, so. . . I did feel a little responsible about him. Maybe I should have kept my mouth shut. But it's easy to toss it off. Hey, I was there for seven weeks and they weren't. The man could've told me to shut up, but he didn't. Then there was a woman there who lost her mother. And I was really impatient with her. Her mother was very elderly, very sick , had been sick for a long, long time.

And, you know, I had lost my dad and my mother, and I just couldn't catch on to this woman's grief. It seems like it's in the natural scheme of things to lose a parent. And I didn't, I really had a hard time dealing with this woman's grief with the loss of her elderly mother. And I don't know, of course it had something to do with their relationship, I guess. I still grieve, wish that my mother were available to me. Friends of mine will say--I'll say, "How about lunch?" And they'll say, "Well, I can't go Wednesday because I see my mother on Wednesday." And I think, "Oh, how lovely." It would be so neat. My friend goes out of state one weekend a month to see her dad. There's an anchor to life there. And, then, people have a lot of grown children in and out of their lives, too, and I don't.

I: Just one.

S: Yeah, and he doesn't—we don't—if we have any contact, I do it. He doesn't call Mom. Never has. Kind of like me. My mother was very anxious for me to get out on my own, in my own life, and was very supportive of that. And I did and I just didn't call her weekly. And I could pick up the phone now and call him and he'd probably not be there. But he'd return my message in the next couple of days. It might be more than that. So if had an emergency, I'd have to say so. I've had someone that called me daily for about a year now. A man that I looked forward to his phone calls. But it's nothing to do with me grief. It's just something to look forward to. Something! And he mainly calls to talk about his problems, I think. I really don't know. It's so strange.

I: But it's the contact?

S: Yeah. It's something to look forward to. I enjoy it. He's sweet and funny and bright and interesting. He wants to call me up and tell me about his day. It's fascinating to me. There has been times I was irritated because I was watching the David Letterman show and I wanted to see a comedian I hadn't seen and I was thinking, "I wish he'd call a different time." And then I thought, "Well, I could tape David Letterman." But he's quit calling at night anyway because he's working two shifts now and he's too tired. But he calls in the day sometimes. But it's to varying degrees dissatisfying. For one thing, if I'm having a bad day and I express and start to unload, he really retreats

I: So he doesn't really want to be your listener.

S: No. Not to any great extent. If it's really bad, he gets angry. He gets upset. One night I was really upset and crying and he said, "Well, what are you doing? I just can't take this! I can't take this now! I'm just too tired. I have too much to do." You know. He's not there. So, that's not totally satisfactory. But—I don't know if it beats nothing or not. Seems so. I've been a busy running-around person. And then I began to, my strategy last fall was to change that and have more quiet time, be more content to be by myself, trying different ways to get what I've considered a grip on my life. And I thought if I just stopped my frenetic running around and just tried to be at home by myself more. . . .Well, and I did regain my ability to concentrate. I can read the paper and work the puzzles, and read a little bit in books and do my job and work on the computer.

There was a point where I couldn't hardly open the mail. I'd open and just stare at it. I didn't know what I'd seen. And I would let it stack for a few days. But now I can deal with the mail and what comes on daily basis. I don't mean that I take care of things like I once did or I used to or I should, but at least I can open it and read it and have it sink into my brain cells and take some appropriate action most of the time. And so that did work. But now I'm kind of at a point where maybe I need to be out and about more. Oh, I got where too I could sit and watch television. I still have yet to go to a movie by myself or to rent a movie to watch by myself. I don't know. It's just something I've got in my head that it's a social activity, you share it with a person. But twice I'd thought I would go to a movie by myself and both times something sidetracked me and I didn't. But I probably need to get back into more planned activity. I tried the singles organization in town and I found it very unpleasant. Their social skills were very poor. For one thing, being single is not enough to tie people together. Level of education and interest...It's even more than that, because I've been around some people that didn't even graduate from high school and I could enjoy their company. I have a lot of expectation about social roles. When I walk into a room full of men and women I expect to be spoken to. If I ring somebody's doorbell and they say we're having a party, come over, in some public way, like the paper, and I go and I ring the doorbell, somebody should be there to open the door and greet me. Not stand there and stand there and stand there. So I found the singles organization to be by and large unsatisfactory to me, at least at the time. I may try it again when I feel a little tougher. But it still may be that they're just not the kind of people that I want to spend my time socializing with. Doesn't that sound snobby? But my situation is different. There's a lot of joking about people's ex-spouses. And they have each other for that, going through that. That's a process for them, this silence and talk. And I'm very non-responsive to that. So through that experience, not wanting to hear people's on and on talk about their problems with ex-spouses, then I can grasp how they must feel when I want to talk about my dead husband. A little bit of it goes a long way.

Interview: 63-year-old female

I: What I want to talk about today—last time we talked about whether you thought your preference when you were grieving was to talk or to be silent, be off by yourself. But today I want to talk about more of your ideas of what grieving is like. So if you could start just by kind of describing to me what you remember or what you've experienced about what grieving feels like

S: Well, it's a panic until you're just numb. Just the panic, the fear of the loss, you know, the fear of the loss. Well it's changed your life and everything and you can't bear that until you get numb and you can't feel. And it's dreading going to an empty house. People spend a awful lot of time walking around Wal-Mart in the middle of the night. I

did. I met a lot of people there that you might be surprised to see. And I wouldn't go there now for anything. Well, it is different at first. Now, what did you ask me?

I: Just to talk a little bit about what grieving is like for you, or has been like for you.

S: Well, it just pulls the rug out from under you and tears you up and the person that you've been near to, you still think they're going to be around. You know, you hear noises and think it's them. You hook into your automatic programming and that's upsetting. I'm getting upset remembering it. And then the way, I think one of the hardest parts is the change in how everybody else reacts to you. At least that was hardest for me. And I don't know if I exaggerate it or what, but anyway I felt it. Whether I was dreaming it up or not, it still was the way I felt.

I: So how—what kind of change was it?

S: Well, people don't want to be around you because it makes them think about it and they don't think about it unless they're around you. And they're upset, too. Except they can forget about it when they're not around you. And I know now it's really hard for me to go to funerals. And I do, but I don't just go to every funeral anymore like I might have used to.

I: Because it brings up the feelings?

S: Yeah. And the change—you're not only changed because you've lost that person, but every other relationship you have changes, too. I guess because I was changing, then that changed my relationships, the way I related to other people. And even the people that tried really hard to hang in with me eventually turned on me. And I thought, you know, I still can't look back and see how I could have made it different. But that was real hard. So that goes on and on. Now since I've married again, many of them are very friendly again.

I: So you think that's because. . .?

S: It's our culture you're talking about.

I: That they think you're okay now so it's okay to relate to you?

S: I'm okay or it's just nature to not have a relationship with a single woman. Even when I was with my husband, lots of the events I went alone because he was busy doing something else. And now the same thing with my second husband. Even when he can't come I'm still invited. But in between I wasn't.

I: That is interesting, isn't it?

S: Um-hmm. And I don't know if other people experience that so clearly. And they can't help it, so you can't be mad at them forever. They're people I care about, so you

just kind of get past it. But it doesn't feel the same to me quite. I can still go socialize but I don't feel so close as I used to as a result.

I: A minute ago you said, you were describing what it was like earlier, and you said, "But I'm not grieving like that anymore." So do you think the process changes?

S: Oh yeah. I'm trying to think of a more recent feeling. That my husband and I—when you're not numb anymore then you do have to deal with the reality. And so that was a major thing and then making life changes. I don't know what it would be like if you didn't have to make life changes. Like, you know, fictionally, in movies or something—we see movies about some people and the man died and the old lady just left in her beautiful mansion and all her servants around her the rest of her life, becoming old and a sort of cultural icon in that locale. Well, that wasn't possible for me. I don't know that that would even be preferable, because you do have to find a new way to live. You have all the monetary things that you have to deal with. You've got to live somewhere, and you've got to pay the rent, make the house payment, pay for the lights. So all those changes come, and, even if you had the money to do it, you still have to manage it in a different way than you did before. No one of the big things that happened to me is I was the hot shot of the family. I was the bookkeeper, the bank account keeper. My husband did not have a checkbook. He didn't have any credit cards. I kept a little cash in his pocket and we just did it that way. I paid the bills. I did not want to waste a dollar on a late fee. When he died we didn't have any bills. And after, in that numb period, I lost it. And I never have gotten it back. I can still forget to make payments. And my paperwork is chaotic. I don't have it organized like I used to. Everything was just, you know, it was like an office, a business, like a business teacher's office, which is what I knew how to do. I don't know why, how I lost it. My second husband is very helpful. So that's one of the main changes that's happened to me, is more of a scattered, or at first it was when you saw things and couldn't face it so you'd just put it aside. I couldn't deal with it, the paperwork. It was overwhelming to me. I wouldn't have been before. But after he died it was. And so that has been the hardest thing for me to come to grips with. And that is still something that I hope that I can manage to get over. Scattered, you know, not being able to remember things. Just a whole lot of changes. And I was the one that did the remembering. So, you know, I think, well, maybe God just lets everybody experience everything. I was the—I thought I was so superior because I did that so well, and now I don't do it well. And I hope, I still hope to get that back But some people never have had the ability to do that. Maybe it's not so important. I'm still here. Let's see, what other changes. Just everything. Everything changes. All the cultural—dating and having men interested in you is not the same as it is when you're originally single and young. It's—there's a harsherness to it. Or maybe I was just lucky when I was young and never experienced guys being mean and angry to me, about how I behaved or didn't behave. And, but they, I found nice old men to be real open about how they felt about me when I didn't do it the way they wanted me to. I think our culture says that men are just—they have more women than they know what to do with Or maybe that's just a few of them that are that way. So the social situation is—it's just hard to have fun. Even at family Christmas parties everything's different. Just everything's different. And sometimes it's

okay for it to be different. It wasn't necessary to me to entertain a big crowd in my house every Christmas. My husband's family.

I: What I'd like you to do now is kind of a "Finish the sentence" kind of exercise. So I'm going to read you a sentence and I want you to see if you can think of a word or a phrase or even an image like a picture that comes to your mind that you can finish the sentence with. "Experiencing the death of someone you care about is like. . . ."

S: It's like nothing else. It's like the death of a lot of yourself. The death of that relationship makes that part of you go, too.

I: Okay. Then, this is the same thing. "The experience of grieving is like. . . ."

S: Having wounds. Sadness overwhelmed me. Distractions. That leads to other things like not being able to sleep. It becomes a major life problem.

I: When you think about other people that maybe you've been around in your life, what do you remember, or how to remember them talking about grieving? How do you remember anybody else describing what grieving is like or talking about grieving?

S: Not a whole lot. "How are you?" "I'm fine." My dad—my mother died and my dad, I watched my dad and he was just determined to keep his chin up. And it was really hard for him, ultimately, in the long run. I'm trying to think of other people. Just friends—a friend of mine whose wife died, I talk to him regular because I see him and he's, he just has to be out, has to be among people all the time. And he will mention to me his wife and what they used to do. I have another friend whose wife died about the same time my husband died. And we were in grief support together for a while. And I see him, and he's, he seems really jovial, and he's always got a life, but he's still really cautious about serious relationships. He does have a lot friends and needs a lot of friends.

I: When you were in the grief support group, do you remember how other people described grieving, either the professionals or the other grieving people?

S: I'm trying to remember what we talked about. It was that first six months. And, you know, "What did you do this week?" It was sort of a day-to-day managing effort I think. I was referred after that six months to a psychologist and had a really good deal, cheap, appointment for as long as I wanted it. I don't know that—it was just a place that I could go and talk. And then it was easy for me to keep my mouth shut the rest of the time. That's the biggest thing. Somebody was paid to listen.

I: So do you remember that person using any particular language to talk about grieving? Or did they mostly just listen to you talk?

S: Well, they don't—they very seldom even use the word grief. You know, "How are you feeling?" "Well, I'm a little better this morning I couldn't sleep last night." "What do you think caused that?" "Well, I just couldn't sleep. I was restless." You know,

that's the kind of talk that went on. And so, as far as a lot of talk describing the grief and the loss and the sadness and dealing with the physical aspects. There's not a lot of talk about it. Just "passed on." "My husband passed on. When did your pass on?" And I always make a point of saying, "Well, my husband died in '93." Because I don't know what passed on means. It doesn't have a lot of meaning to me. I think there's religious significance in that you've moved to a new life, so that may be so and may not be. We'll soon all know, I guess. But I can't think of any words about grief—sadness, scared. What's another word for grief?

I: People say mourning sometimes.

S: Okay. I haven't heard that word in a long time. No one's ever said to me, "Are you mourning the loss of your husband?" I see it written, but I don't hear it.

I: Bereavement is another word, too.

S: It's a very formal word, written on cards and things. But it's not in people's conversation.

I: It used to be very common, someone was "in mourning."

S: And we dressed a certain way and it was a time frame put on it. I think there's value in that. You're supposed to just snap out of it nowadays and just get on with it. And you know, I think about people that work. And I wonder how they can be off work three days and then be back and their work just goes on. Well, I imagine there's lots of, they give them lots of space. And then, another thing, maybe that helps, because you do have that that keeps on. Whereas when my husband died, nothing kept on. Because my work was him and there wasn't anything to just go to every day and continue. And I've thought since then that having that, I've encouraged people to hang on to their work. I look back and I think it would have been easier for me if I'd had a job to go to, or some other definite things, and everything didn't have to change so. But then eventually it seems like most people do change. Even those that have jobs. Maybe not the first two years, but later you'll hear that they've moved or are doing something different.

I: Anything else you can think of to say about the experience of grieving?

S: It doesn't ever end. I don't think—I can't say—I can only speak for the, what is it, seven years? Eight years? So I can only speak for that. When I say it never ends—it may. My second husband's wife died in '85. And it hasn't ended for him in lots of ways. And you don't know—you've got the person's memory fixed in your heart That's just a given. But it's the other things about your hopes and dreams for your life together that you grieve, too. The whole lifestyle, everything. And I really have a hard time with that. And we have lots of friends and my second husband is a very congenial person as far as doing things I enjoy. But that confronts me. And also that has to do with aging. I think it gets all mixed up together. And also, recently I had lots of deaths in my family, the loss of my brother. And there's just not any communication at all there, with that side of the

family. And then a couple of my cousins have died. So that's what I've been dealing with. It comes back when there's these other deaths.

Interview - 50-year-old male.

I: Okay. This has to do with people's needs for either speech or silence, talking or not talking, in grieving situations. So I was wondering first if you could remember the times of loss in your life—I know you lost a brother and a sister both, and you've probably had other times too, what your own memory is, first of your own personal need, whether you needed to talk about that grieving or whether you needed more to be to yourself or maybe you had different needs at different times?

S: A little of both, I think. Within the comfort element, I think it was more from an outside source than from inside. In other words, the comfort involved in it in speaking with someone or talking with someone was—the need, for me anyway, was a selfish need. It was to help me. It was so that I could be comforted. Family-wise, by getting together and this kind of thing, everybody was wanting sympathy, so to speak, everybody was wanting in that element of grieving, I suppose you could call it that. But within that family element everybody wanted their own needs and therefore I don't think anybody got any need out of it because everybody was trying to be selfish in what they wanted, and just nobody was willing to give. They wanted to receive. And outside of the family, within the friend element, it was totally focussed on me, or on that other individual in that sense. And I think the only reason it was a comfort was because someone was applying their feelings to yours, or at least that's the attitude—they were putting you first, they were feeling sorry for you. And they were trying to comfort the individual. Uh—within the family I had a lot of problems because I grew up in the family knowing each individual in truth, not in the presentations they were giving. It was real hard for me to accept.

I: People were not being themselves?

S: Exactly. They were being what they wanted somebody to feel sorry for, or they were being whatever in that element. And I think to a certain degree outside of that element, outside of the family, I didn't appreciate so much the attitude that people had to come in and tell me good things about my brother in order to show me how much he was valued. The value of my brother and my sister, to me, was shown before they died, not after. In other words, it's real easy to hate somebody while they are living and yet praise them when they die. And, in that effect, that was a duty that is society's hand-me-down for years and years, that when people are alive you treat them one way but then when they die it's—

I: They get a lot better after they die?

S: Right. And you know people that would harm, mentally or physically or verbally or whatever, an individual, say bad things about them during their life, or whatever, try to hurt them, and then come to me and tell me what a great person he was. I didn't appreciate that, and I still don't.

I: So you saw some of that happening?

S: Oh, yeah. I think that happens in all cases. You know. I think—I don't know. It's real hard for me, in other words for someone that I know, maybe I went to school with or something on that order, that's passed away, it's real hard for me to go to the family and express sympathy that they would understand that I could live with myself expressing. I can go up and do all of the social graces, just like everybody else does, and pretend that I've done my duty. But it's real hard for me, as an individual to do that. I don't know if that answers your question or not.

I: Well, that's getting at it. So it sounds like you are saying that it was hard for you to get your needs met for grieving within your family because everybody kind of had their own different needs and they were not always the same?

S: To me everybody was putting on a show. Everybody was putting on "Feel sorry for me more than you feel sorry for someone else because my brother died, or my son died." The element of—and it may be that I misunderstand what sympathy is. However, if I had a friend come up, my friend would say, "Hey, we're real sorry. If there's anything we can do, let us know." And that would be it. It wasn't like, "Boy, your brother was a good guy" or "Boy, your sister..." because, you know, I lived with him and they lived with him, so there was no need for them to tell me basically what I already knew. Now the older element---I'm talking about a generation above—my folks or whatever, they look at death, they look at sympathy, they look at things a lot different than I do. A lot differently than I do. And that's okay. I'm not saying that they don't have that, and it's comfort to them I'm sure. But to me it's a false value. To me it's more degrading than it is helpful. I don't like to sit there and listen to good things from somebody that I know didn't like the other person. It's hypocritical. There's no value to it. Matter of fact it's a very negative value. The family as a unit, each has its own element when you grow up. You don't change from that element. The dad's the dad, the mom's the mom, the brother's the brother, the sister's the sister. And each one of those, each element interlinks within that to make a whole.It's a puzzle—a crossword puzzle. It's just that whenever one element then because of that situation tries to get out of their element into something else so that somebody else will look at them on the outside and say, "He really loved his brother." When in fact, maybe he didn't, you see. Now, the family members know this. Because we lived with it everyday. So that, within the family, is magnified a lot more. I think. It would be real hard for me to sit down and visit with someone in my own family—my sister, or my mother or my dad—about my brother or my sister when I know already how they felt. Because it's not truthful thing. Sure, they're feeling sad, and it may be more guilt than anything. But you have to understand that, within that element, there is going to be guilt. I don't care who you are. There's going to be guilt.

I: And for parents, I think, when a child dies, there's a lot of guilt because it's an unnatural thing for your child to die before you do. So you feel in some way like, you know, you should have died instead.

S: Right. And I think that the guilt involved has to do not only with what you said but also maybe in the sense of "I really didn't do what I should have done when I had the chance to do it. Therefore I'm going to make up for it now." Which, to me, is too late.

I: You talked like maybe there were some friends with whom the grieving could be more natural with. When you were with those people, did you find yourself needing to—wanting to talk about your grief, or did you need to keep that inside and just grieve quietly?

S: Both. I think there's times in everyone's life when you would rather have that as a very personal feeling, yet be with somebody. Just because you're not alone. Whether the subject ever comes up or not; it doesn't matter. It's just having somebody there that you know you could talk to. And you know that you're within your private self. And they're not pushing you. They're just there. And there's other times when, yeah, you'd like to talk. And it's not so much that they're offering. It's not so much that they're trying to put another brick upon a building that you're trying to build, and an image, it's just the fact that they're there and they're letting you talk. Basically they're letting you express what it is that you haven't been able to express with anyone else. Not even to the point that they would understand, but you think they would. And it has meaning only in that degree. I think, as far as the elements of expression, I think it's a very personal thing. It's something that nobody else would understand. There's no way that you could express in your mind sympathy within yourself for a family member that I could understand. I can express it. That expression is the building block for happiness within me, just to get it out, just to let it go. And you listening, and you understanding to the degree that this is only meaning something to me, and that you're there and you're willing to be there and to listen, that's the value of it.

I: Okay. Let's switch focus and think about the people you were around when you were grieving—your friends and other people like friends of your parents who came to the house, just anybody you remember being around. Do you remember those people as talking a lot while they were there? Were there people who were just there and didn't really do that much talking?

S: Both. There were some people that came to the door, just to hand a sack of groceries and could show it in that way and would say they were just on their way downtown and they wanted to let us know that they were thinking of us, and then they turned around and left. And then there were other people that felt compelled, I'm sure, to come in. We had a couple of neighbors that more or less took over because of our situation. They came in. They made sure the coffee was made. They did everything behind the scenes. They didn't visit, so to speak. They just did the work. They saw to it that if somebody came in they had a cup of coffee or whatever and it wasn't for Mom or for Dad or for me or for anyone else to do that. They were showing me compassion for the family. They were

showing me compassion as a group. It wasn't so much the individual—my sister or my brother. They were part, as friends, they were part of our family. But not the appearance part. They were behind the curtains part. And then there were other elements, the other friends, so to speak, that'd come in, and it was strictly a verbal thing. It was strictly an outwardly expression. Very much in front of the curtains.

I: When you say those people were in front of the curtains, am I sensing there a feeling that what they were saying was not sincere? You said something about that before.

S: Right. Here I'm judging others.

I: Well, you can tell me your feeling, and that's not judging.

S: Well, to me there was—if you put it in a percentage. I think there was 20% sincerity and 80% something to that--. I can't say that there wasn't any sincerity at all, because that wouldn't be fair to the individual. For instance, when my sister died, we have a lady here in town. And she came by and just stayed an instant. It wasn't for anything other than the fact that we had a family member die. And she wanted to show that she had love for the family, but it wasn't---it was 100% genuine. There wasn't any put-onnish. But there was other people that came by and sat around and—uh, the words I want to use I can't use on the tape! You can edit, can't you? They would just say things just to be saying them. Just to be there, just to say things that didn't have anything to do with.... I found myself, in both cases, with my sister and my brother both, as a personal thing, I found myself pulling away from all that, going into a separate element. I had to be there. As a family member I had to be there. Society dictates that I'm there. So I had to be there. But I didn't have to be in the same room, and I didn't have to be involved. Because it was a sacrilege, if you understand what I'm trying to say. It just wasn't genuine. It wasn't what it to me was supposed to be. But there were times that it was a very genuine feeling of comfort for me. You remember when you came over and mom and dad, with my sister, and mom and dad and Gary's mom and dad were sitting there. Mom wanted me there, but you notice I didn't participate. I just flat—I was in the other room. That's as far away as I could get. Because that wasn't my sister. They were giving you something to tell somebody else that wasn't my sister So I didn't want to participate. I had to be there. Mom wanted me there; Dad wanted me there. And I was the same way when people came to the house. I don't know that I made anyone feel uncomfortable. I hope I didn't. There's a lot of times that I, because I would feel as if I would make someone feel uncomfortable, I did things that I really didn't want to do.. I stayed in the room. I talked to whoever I need to talk to let them give whatever presentation they wanted to present, and go on. And in that way I felt like I was wrong. But, on the other hand, I didn't want to just be so callous.

I: You've kind of talked about three different styles: the person who would just come and hand the groceries through the door. and the person who would come in and make coffee and do all those kinds of things and then the person who would sit and talk. Of those three—and let's for now assume that the people doing the talking are the sincere ones—which one of those three styles do you find most comforting?

S: I felt the actual comfort in me and the people I appreciate more, as to my reactions, would be the ones that would come in and basically get behind and—

I: The coffee makers, the behind the scenes people?

S: Yeah. The ones that were basically part of the family by love, not by blood. And they didn't want to interfere. They didn't interfere. The only thing they did in any manner was to contribute. There was no put-on. They were just there. And if you didn't really try to perceive the fact, you wouldn't know that they were there. Now the family knew they were there. You see what I'm saying? Now the people that just came in and handed the groceries, I appreciated that. And, in an overall thing, you gotta understand it's all basically to me, it's a play. It's part of life, but it's a play. Everybody has their characters. Everybody has their roles. And it's a play. It's a social ritual. It's put on your headdress, and do what your lines tell you to do. Do what you're supposed to do. Stand in this place because that's where you stand on the stage. You say these things because that's what the director says. And it's real hard for me to get in to it.

I: So when you say it's a play, do you think most of what our culture does around grieving and death is a play? Or are you just specifically talking about people saying things about the dead people that aren't really true?

S: I think once you get out of self, once you get out of your inner being in the grievance, once you are no longer within, then I think it's all basically a show. I can grieve within me, and it's a very personal thing and no one sees it. Whereas, once I take that grievance out of me, once I take it out it's strictly for someone else to see and to feel sorry for me. Feel sorry for me, give me some attention here. You know, look how hard I'm suffering. Feel sorry for me.

I: So for you then you don't think there are any legitimate ways for people to express grief outside of themselves?

S: That's a good question. That—with another individual?

I: Just anyway.

S: Well, now within me. Let's say I really needed to express myself with somebody. That was within me to express myself with somebody. I would know within me who that person was, truthfully now, if we're dealing with truth, that I would express myself and they would understand. I would also know in truth that I could pick another individual that would give me this---and I hate to use the word manipulative, but that would be basically why I would pick someone if I wanted this "Poor Bob" attitude, then I would pick someone that would give me this "Poor Bob" and feed my ego and whatever. But in truth I think one can grieve within himself totally, not saying that from an outside source, because they need to show—they have a purpose in coming, and that purpose is within them. They need to show whatever it is within them to fulfill themselves. In other

words, let's say Mrs. Brown's daughter died and I went to school with Mrs. Brown's daughter, but that was thirty years ago. Okay, and now Mrs. Brown lives in town and her daughter died. It would be for me and my presence for the rest of the town to see, so I would go to Mrs. Brown.

I: So that would not be authentic?

S: No, it wouldn't. It would be strictly for show. Now if Mrs. Brown's daughter and I were very close.....

I: Okay. So you really didn't care anything about Mrs. Brown's daughter, you just went...

S: Right. Just went for people to say, "Well, Bob, didn't..." That type of thing.

I: So you're saying a lot of what we do about grieving is just because we think people are going to think better of us if we do those things.

S: Sure.

I: Just a little bit of change of direction here. In some cultures, for example in the book of Job in the Bible, when Job loses his children and all his property, he goes and sits outside of town and he sits on this ash heap and mourns. And the Bible says that these friends come and they sit there by him and they just sit there and don't say a word for seven days. It says because his grieving was so great. And then finally he is the first to speak. So it seems like there must have been some kind of custom in that culture that you were silent in the face of grief, or you at least waited for the grieving person to speak first. Well, there are some other cultures, like the Apaches, for example in Arizona, who have kind of that same idea in that they believe that if someone is in really deep grieving you don't talk to them because they think that when you are in acute grief you become a whole different person. And you don't know who that person is, so you don't talk to them. You just keep silent until they are through that. So my question is, do you think we have anything like that in our culture, or are we just totally talkers and don't have any feel for that silence?

S: Yes, I think that basically the latter. I think it's almost an attraction. It's a magnet. As soon as—at least in the two deaths I've had in my family—it draws to. It's very much not a silent thing. It's very much expressive, very much verbal. It's almost as if a comfort level is dictated by how much good you can say about someone else. And it's our, in the illness that I'm dealing with, it was a complete—it drew people to react for themselves and not—I don't want to say not for the family. They reacted for themselves to react to the family.

I: But I wonder if maybe...it would be interesting to figure this out and I don't know how you'd do it exactly...I wonder if maybe people have that impulse more with someone who dies who's fairly young than if someone is old Because then they feel they have to

justify it somehow, so if they can say how good they were, we can say it's like they lived their whole life in these thirty years and it makes it okay.

S: Well, the comparison there, to a degree, my brother passed away when he was thirty. He lived in this town his total life, basically. Everyone in town knew him. My sister lived in this town till 19 or 20 years old, moved out and basically never came back. Both grew up, both had the same friends. They were like 18 months apart. She was a senior one year and then my brother was a senior the next. They both knew the same people. However, when my brother died there was a lot more involvement community-wise. There was a lot more involvement as far as people, numbers. When my sister died, of course it was a minute thing. There were some friends who had stayed in town basically, but we're talking, gosh twenty years. So some people had moved out, some people had gone. So the younger the person, the closer attached to the community he is because he hasn't been grown yet. And, if I understood your question---people feel sorrier for a younger person that dies than for an older one?

I: Or maybe sorrier for the family. Just feeling some need to justify why this happened. So if you can say, well this person was so good that they lived their whole life already and it's okay that they died.

S: Right. And I've heard that element, I'm sure. We always try to justify different things. And there's no justification for death. If you lost your son or whatever, there's no justification for it. But we as individuals feel like we, though our compassion, have got to give you a satisfactory answer to death. You've got to understand it And we, all-knowing, because we know everything, we're gonna tell you what the reason is so you can feel comforted. We're gonna tell you and you're gonna sit there and say, "Yeah. He's right. I feel a lot of comfort." But that's the image that people have. They think they can come and tell you something that's gonna make comfort in your life. And it's not. It's just not gonna do it. I'll give you an example. In the situation I think older people, and I'm going to use—the only older people that I've ever dealt with is my mom and dad in that situation---and the younger people, of course, are the kids that I deal with, my sister and so forth, things of that nature. Now, we as younger don't have the same values or the ritual value that the older people have. Probably the best example I can say is that, when my sister died, she was very emphatic, did not want a funeral. And also she didn't want an open casket. She just didn't want an open casket at all. And this was just—that was two of her main things. She didn't want the funeral; she didn't want the open casket. Mom and Dad were not going to let that casket stay closed. They just weren't going to do it. Now, their interpretation was that, by not having the funeral you don't have an open casket. That's what my sister meant, you know. She didn't want an open casket. Well, that's not what she said. She said she didn't want a funeral and she didn't want an open casket. Now their justification was, like, at a funeral you have an open casket, and all she'd had to do was say, "I don't want a funeral." She wouldn't have had to specify the open casket. However, Mom and Dad, in their ritualistic values of death, you've got to have this parade. You've got to have it. And whether it's at the funeral home, whether it's bring her up and put her on the porch, you're gonna have it. You're gonna have this casket open. So that was their ritualistic values as far as what they want to do. Had I

been in charge of it, the casket wouldn't have been open. It would have been strictly the value that my sister and placed on it, and not a value that society places on it.

I: So then you think as a whole, whatever the person who died wanted we should do, not what the grievers want?

S: Sure. Sure. The person does what they want to do in life. And the last thing they do in life is dictate how they want their death, basically. So why should we go overboard and say, "Well, I know better"? However, I have to understand this also, that because they're no longer present, they're no longer there, then one should look to life in this order. For Mom and Dad I'm sure they are comforted to a degree, as much as you can be comforted, by going through the ritualistics, "I didn't do anything wrong" attitude. "Everything went great." To me, I was forced, I was forced to go up there. I was forced to go to the funeral home to witness this. They were not gonna allow me not to do that. It was—had I not gone up there, I would've been a man from hell. Because their my folks, because they're my parents, their will was more than mine. In other words, I gave in. Because their value---I was standing on principle; they were standing on something else. I don't know what they were standing on. But it really meant a lot to them.

I: So, in your own personal belief system, those kinds of rituals, like having an open casket, those are only for show? They don't meet any need, you don't think?

S: Not in me. I can't answer for anyone else. When I look at it, my value is that it is for show. But for me, it is. Now, what it is to someone else I can't answer. But it is strictly. . . .

I: So, in your own opinion, do you pretty much just feel like there shouldn't be any rituals connected with death?

S: No. I think our whole life is dictated by rituals. And I think there has got to be one. But I think you have the right to dictate your rituals in your life. I think you're the one.

I: So whatever ritual I want when I die?

S: I think that should be honored. You lived your life. And you made your choices. You are responsible for yourself in life.

I: So then, what if the person dies without saying what they want?

S: Then in that area, then it would I think have to go to the people that basically knew that person. Now, here's the concept. For instance, if I knew that my sister didn't want one, but I wanted to be real selfish and do all this, and I did it the way I wanted to do, then I'm wrong. Someone has got to take care of it. How they take care of it, to me, should reflect the person they're taking care of, not me. Not me. And the comfort for me would be that I'm doing what she wanted. There's comfort to me. There was no comfort whatsoever, at all, in going up there and viewing her.

I: Why do you suppose we even have that ritual? Why do we have open caskets?

S: I don't know. I'm sure it's been brought through the ages. I'm sure there's some meaning behind it.

I: This isn't a trick question. I don't know the answer, either. I just wanted to know what your ideas were.

S: Yeah. I think there's a lot of curiosity. I think there's a lot of . . . I see, whenever you talk to someone afterwards, "Oh, wasn't she great? Didn't her hair look nice? She looked so real." I think it's more of a curiosity, more of a "how bad did the doctor butcher her" or "how old is she now" or "I haven't seen her in thirty years. I'd like to see if she's changed." That type of thing. I don't think it's got any religious connotation, in my mind, whatsoever. I don't think there is any godly value to it at all. It's gotta be what does a dead person look like. How many dead people do you see in your life? And how many dead people do you see that are pretty? If you see one, usually if you walk upon on, usually it's not a very pretty sight, I'm sure. I've never seen one. I've never had that happen to me. But death would be a curious thing, I suppose. And so I'm sure that's what it is. And there's just something about it.

Interview: 56-year-old male

I: Last time we talked about—I was trying to get people to talk about when they were grieving, if they'd rather be off to themselves and be quiet or if they wanted to talk to people. At that point you were talking about the deaths of your brother and sister, but your parents were still alive. So I know that since then you've experienced at least those two deaths. So today what I'm trying to get out is just the way that people talk about grieving. So what I want to ask you is if you could just describe for me, and I know your experiences of grieving have been different with different people, but if you could just talk a little bit—maybe you could choose the one of those deaths that perhaps you had the most feelings about and just talk about how you would describe those feelings.

S: Okay. You're right. There's been a process. There's been the element of my life where in all facets, other than a child of my own, I've lost a brother, sister, mother, father. So it's real difficult for me to pinpoint any one that would be more of a type situation than the other. I think with my element I think it's a—the grieving part, if I understand the definition of grieving, is very much a solitude concept. Whereas there is a certain amount, I feel, that most people go through which is very much of a public display, which is necessary. I think that is a very necessary thing—pity-pot, poor me type situation. But when you really get into the inner feelings, really get into the

experiences, emotional experiences that you have, and I think for me it's a very private thing. Other than that, when you're around someone, when I'm around someone and we tend to get into that emotional concept of grief, then it becomes a very, to me anyway it becomes a very show type situation. I'm trying to get sympathy. Or I want that sympathy, or I need that sympathy. And therefore—or I need to try to make someone feel like I cared more than I did, if that makes sense. I don't know if this is answering your question or not, but within me, the grieving, in a very truthful, very conceptual, very much this is really what I feel, then it has to be very private thing.

I: And how would you describe those feelings, those private feelings?

S: I would tend to say that it's a very, the missing part?

I: Just all of it

S: The missing part of it, as far as the individual not being there any more, a lot of it is "I wish I had of" type situation, or "I'm glad I did." It's mixed in the sense there's guilt, there's very much of a love, there's very much of a fear. I can't say that there's just one definite emotion. But when I feel emotion, it's very selfish concept, because that is just something that I feel. I may miss my mother, because I miss her smile, or I miss something that filled a void in my life. And it's not so much that I miss her as an individual as much as I miss her as something that benefited my life. That's a very selfish thing, you see. I mean, there's a void there that at one time is full, and now it's not there any more. So we conjure the mind to think that you can remember that smile, or you can remember that certain thing. But you can't. And so therefore it's, that is the privacy that is involved. I don't know that grief is all love. I don't know that grief is all, if you have a good and a bad concept of grief, it's all good. I think grief is no more than not having something that you had at one time, and you miss it. Whether you miss is good, or you miss it bad, it's still not there. I had definitely feelings within the element of my father that I didn't have with my mother, completely different. Most of the things that I grieve with my father would not necessarily be in the concept of good, but still yet it's not there anymore. You know, it's not that I really miss it and wish it were there, but it's just not there anymore. I don't know if I'm being----Now my brother and sister are completely different elements. They're not the authoritarian. They're companions. They're—they share with you things that you don't share with your parents. They grow up with you. They see your goods and bads and I know my sister shared growing up with me. We'd sneak off and smoke cigars, or we would do some things of that nature, you know. And so, and too she was, my sister was my mentor, so to speak. If I ever had any problems or any trouble, I'd always go to her and she would give me the advice that I needed to have. And my brother died before we really had an adult experience. We had childhood memories, but we were just getting into the adult phase of brothers when he passed away. So I didn't really have the adult relationship with him that I wish I had of. But the relationship I did have with him was a great experience for me. But it's all based, as far as I in a truthful way, in a truthful manner, I don't particularly grieve their existence as them being a separate entity to the world and their benefit to the world, or what they contributed to their families. It's strictly a very selfish thing as to what they

meant to me. You know, I could really care less what they meant to anyone else. It's a personal thing. Like I say, there's a lot of times that, for instance, when we're talking now, there's an emotional concept. There's a—but I don't know that that's a truthful thing as much as it is a show thing. You see what I'm saying? I may be trying to convince you that I care more than I do. I may be trying to convince you that I loved more than I loved. I have no concept.

I: I think you need to trust your feelings more! I think you just miss them.

S: Well, I do miss them. I miss them very much. But that's like I say, that's a very selfish thing. But, on the other hand, there's no reason for me, and this is my total concept, there's no reason for me to sit here and get teary-eyed with you when I can sit out here and drink coffee and not. So, you see?

I: Well, except that I'm making you talk about it. I make you bring up feelings that you wouldn't feel otherwise. So it's okay.

S: That's true too. I understand. I understand what you're saying. But I don't know that that—I don't know, and this is just me, I don't know that I'm not doing that just to make you think that I'm a very sensitive individual. You see what I'm saying? That's within me. Not that I'm trying to do that. But I don't know if it's in my subconscious or whatever. Okay?

I: If you were with a younger person who had not every experienced the death of someone close to them and you were going to try to explain to that person or prepare them for what it might be like, what would you say to them about what they could expect?

S: The simple thing would be is to try to pick out some concept that they would understand, utilizing nature as how it evolves, or maybe a pet that they've lost, or something on that order. But I don't really know that I could ever explain to them. I could give them a concept of what death is. But I really don't know if I could ever really explain to somebody what love is, or what hate is, or what being mad means. You can get close in order to know that once they get there they say, "Ah! I must be here, because this is kinda that concept." But for me to explain death to someone who had never felt it or sensed it, I had to go through that with my children, to a degree. I'm sure they had other people deal with them also. But it was in the sense that it was a natural process. It's something that we all go through. There's nothing scary about it. It's something that you see everyday if we choose to see death everyday. We can see death in leaves. We can see death in people. We can see death on TV. The emotional part of dealing with death, you could say, "I just want you to stop and think what it would be like if this particular scenario happened in your life," and that may give you some concept of what the emotion of death is. But that would be a thing I wouldn't know how to do I think you really have to experience it before you—and then trying to explain that. You can just get close.

I: So along that long, are there any other experiences at all in life that you think compare in any way to the experience of grief? Is there anything else you can think of that happens to people in life that can compare with grieving?

S: Yes. I think we have those experiences every day. I don't know that we can single out death as being the only thing we grieve for. We grieve for pain in other people. We grieve, we say we grieve, we call it sympathizing with because we have, in the process of life, in our wisdom that we gain because of that life, we have experienced certain elements of emotion, negative and positive. So therefore we can relate that to ourselves when someone else goes through a similar situation. Divorce—I've been through two. As far as grieving, I think I grieved just as much, if not harder, in that element, than I did in the death. I don't know what it's like to lose a child, but I can understand that that would be devastating. Friends that have problems, that go through the same similar situations that you go through, I think we grieve for them in a sense that they're having pain, that they're going through something that we understand. And we know how bad it hurts because it hurt us. And so, yes, I think there's a lot of other things involving every day that we deal with.

I: When you think about things you've heard other people say about grieving, either things they've said to you about how you should grieve or shouldn't grieve, or things they've said about their own grief?

S: How they express their grief?

I: Yeah.

S: If I understand your question, no one's ever set down to me and tried to compare notes, if that's what you mean. I have witnessed other people's going through grief. I have watched them deal with it in the same order through death that I went through. And a lot of times, I'll have to admit a lot of times I think it's more for show than it is for---but that's totally from my attitude and my point of view. And there's other people that I think just can't deal with it at that particular time. So they're gonna have trouble. In other words, they're very much business in order---we take care of this, we do this You understand that what they're going through, but there's no emotional outlet. But as far as anyone just ever sitting here in that mode and say, "This is what I felt," no, I've never had that.

I: What about just sort of the common wisdom about our culture? You now, like the way we show people grieving on television or maybe other places in the media? Or just what people in our culture say about what grieving should be like or is like?

S: You mean what in my judgmental way how I feel like it should be?

I: Well, how you think people generally in this culture talk about grieving.

S: Right. I think, okay, within that area of witnessing other people going through grief, there are so many different elements, different emotions that those people deal with at that time they're going through, that I don't know that we could single that out as grief. I think there may be hysteria, there may be fear, there may be. . . . For instance, let's take the Okla. City bombing when it was on TV and people were carrying babies and that type situation. I think there were so many things that were involved in that at that time that, to me, grief really has no one clear-cut "this is what grief should be." I can't think of grief not being accumulation of many, many things, not just one thing. And it's like grief being a herd. There's many, many cattle in a herd. You say, "I've got a herd of cattle." Well, that's kind of to me that's what grief is. Grief is the accumulation and a combination of many, many things. For me to tell someone else how to do it, or for me to set—I can sit here and say if I did that I would be a hypocrite. But for them to do that, that may be something they have to do. But if I did that, that would be wrong. I just couldn't do that without selling tickets and having people look. But I don't think there's a right or wrong way. For me personally, like I say, I think a lot of times it is show. But that's for me to decide because I would be showing if I did that.

I: Okay. Because what I'm looking for is the language, the way people talk about grief, I'm going to ask you to do a "complete the sentence exercise." And this is stuff we've already talked about, but if you could just think of one word or a phrase that you could use to finish this sentence: Experiencing the death of someone you care about is like . . . .

S: In one word?

I: It doesn't have to be a word. You can use several words.

S: I'll say it's like a big void. It's just like a big void. It's like something that was there is not there anymore. A void within one's deepest part or soul or mind or whatever.

I: Okay. Here's another one like that: The experience of grieving is like. . . .

S: Soul-searching. Like looking into one's self. It's like seeing that mirror-image of one's inner concepts, visualizing you as that individual, you as that emotional being.

I: Okay. Anything else you want to say about grieving?

S: Well, I don't know. For me to sit here and talk about it, I have a real bad problem with understanding who I really am in that sense of truth. I think we all deal with that. Most people don't have that concept yet, but they will. But for me to talk about an emotion, for me to talk about death or love or friendship or anything, one tends to flower. One tends to try to convince. We are predators. The human being is a predator. And we manipulate in order to gain from what we wish to get. So it's very hard for me to sit here and say that I'm actually, at this moment, being truthful. I hope I am, and I hope I can come as close to it as I can. But I may be just trying to, for me, not for you, but for me, to manipulate your concept as to who I am or what I am. And I know that doesn't have

anything to do with grief, other than grief, if that's the scenario for grief, then in actuality grief isn't grief. Do you see what I'm saying?

I: I think you need to give yourself a break! Just let yourself feel what you feel and don't worry so much about it.

S: Well, and I do, when I'm within me. But when I'm visiting with you or a friend or someone else, then I'm—I have manipulated people my whole life, in one way or another, whether it's by being a good person or whatever. And I may be doing that now. I don't know. Just because I'm gonna be published. I think a lot of times when I'm sitting down talking to someone about my brother or my sister or my mother, it's all the emotion. It's all based on—for instance, Dad was very much an authoritarian, very much of an " I am the number one king of the hill" type situation. So when I'm visiting with someone about him, I'm not necessarily being very complimentary. But in that sense, as a release, like you said, to talk with someone, to visit with someone, that helps, I assume to get it out. So that would be classified as grief, I suppose, if grief is a way of eliminating emotion, or a way of remembering one, or a way of.....I don't really know what grief is. I don't know what the definition of grief is. Is there a definition of grief?

I: Well, I think the general definition would be whatever people feel, whatever experiences they have, emotionally, spiritually, even physically, as a result of the death of someone they care about.

S: You know, you mentioned spiritually. I don't know that I have ever conceived that as a spiritual element of my life, in the sense of having a spiritual thought in that sense. I can say, " Well, they're not in pain anymore because they're in heaven or wherever." But for me to get closer to my spiritual, I don't know that I ever have. I tune to the other emotions, so to speak. That's very interesting. I never perceived that as a spiritual element in my life.

I: Well, sometimes I think people, when they go through grief, they either—some people get angry with God, or some people just rely on their spiritual resources as a way of getting through. Sometimes just the coming up against death just reminds people of the spiritual aspect of life.

S: Um-hmm. And how they've related to life. They see death and know that there is an end, and it brings that end to mind. Would that be more fear than. . ?

I: I don't think so. I experienced that when my mother died, just the realization that, okay, here my parents both died in their early seventies. Okay, I'm fifty-one. That means it's possible that I only have twenty years left. I mean, you know, my grandmother lived to be ninety-seven, so I could also have forty years left. But, who knows? So then I want to say, "Okay, so what do I want to do with those twenty years? If this is the time I have left, how do I make that count? Do I want to keep doing what I'm doing? Do I want to change?" It's not really fear. It's just born out of a sense of –

you know, that it's important to make the last years count for something. So that at the end of them I can say, "Okay. I did what I wanted to do." But it doesn't look like fear.

S: Value, a self-value of self-fulfillment?

I: Yeah. Self-fulfillment and being just, wanting to make the most out of life while I have it.

S: Um-hmm. Some aspects of that, some people would go what we would call the good way and some people would say, "Okay, I've just got so much time to go, so I'm really...."

I: Eat, drink and be merry!

S: Exactly! And so their accomplishment in life is gonna be the same. But, on the other hand, everything we accomplish in life basically ends when we die, does it not?

I: Well, I think there are things that go on after us. Whatever we have engendered in other people goes on.

S: Well, I understand scientifically how twenty generations ago I still have certain aspects of that, and twenty generations from now ahead my children and their children will have certain aspects. Scientifically I can understand that. Mentally, I don't know that that would be....And I think most of us deal with the mental aspect of carrying on, and providing our intelligence, providing our wisdoms to the world, as that being our legacy.

I: It's just hard to know. They physics people say now that nothing that anybody ever does doesn't have---so like your feeding hummingbirds has all kinds of changes on the world. It's like ripples.

S: Exactly. I understand that concept. And I believe that. Sure. But that's on a daily thing. So we should live right daily.

Interview: 49-year-old male, grief professional

I: There are some cultures (etc.). . . .So, from what you remember about your own grieving when your wife died, did you need yourself to talk or did you need to be silent or did you have both of those needs at different times?

S: I had both at different times, but I think my first need was silence. And then when I wanted to talk, there wasn't anybody to talk to. I think that's a problem in our society.

I: So it was like the time you needed to be silent was when there were other people around?

S: Well either by myself or even with other people. I remember right after she died her kids were there and they were doing a lot of talking, and I wasn't. And I've often wondered what they felt, what they thought about me. And then it was the same for the next few days.

I: You just felt the need to be silent?

S: Yeah. And her son spent that first night with me, and he did a lot of talking, and we drank a little wine. But he did most of the talking. I was being silent. And then he spent the next couple of nights with his sisters, and they did a lot of talking. And then sometime later I wanted to do some talking, and I couldn't find anybody to talk to. And then it really got oppressive at that point. The silence got oppressive. That's when I really started getting down.

I: How long was that before you---like a couple of weeks later?

S. No, longer. It began to build. Yeah, a couple of weeks later, probably. And they says that's the most serious time for people. Family and friends have gone home and if you don't have an immediate family support group or something like that in the home with you, the silence then becomes unbearable, or can become unbearable. And that's what happened to me. And it just got worse and worse. And then I, being the fool that I am, thought I could handle it. "Oh, I know all these things." And I didn't handle it. It got worse and worse and worse.

I: So is it out of that that you decided to go to the support group?

S: Absolutely. I think that's the value of support groups. The other side of that is that sometimes support groups make you talk, or they expect you to talk and you don't want to. Support groups have to honor silence, too. And I think a well-conducted support

group will do that. It's conceivable that a support group could sit there an hour and nobody say anything.

I: It'd be just like Job!

S: Well, yeah! Well see, I think in this country—I think that's fascinating about—I'd forgotten about the Job thing. I didn't know about the Apaches. In this country we seem to have this enormous desire to talk. Now I'm a talker anyway. But there are times that I want to be quiet, and that was through the first few days and for a while after that. When my wife died I wanted the quiet. But then I didn't want to be quiet anymore and there wasn't anybody.

I: What do you remember about—you talked a little bit about her kids—but what do you remember about other people who were there, who came in to the home after she died. Do you remember most of those people as talking, or were there people who were just there but didn't really say anything? Or were people mixed, or what?

S: There weren't many.

I: There just weren't many people who came?

S: No, because we lived---all of our friends were in another town. The one friend who came, he came as soon as he could. And he has an uncanny ability to know when to be quiet. And either let me talk or let me be quiet. And he didn't press me. And I thought that was really remarkable, looking back on it, and even at the time. But I think that's because he and I are in tune enough that we could appreciate that in each other. It's been my experience, though, with other people's deaths, that people do a lot of talking. And they expect a lot of talking. And they think there's something wrong with you if you don't want to talk.

I: So when you go to visit someone who's lost someone. . .

S: I'll just go and sit with them and be quiet if they want to be quiet. And sometimes that's exactly what they want to do.

I: So you sort of take your cue from them?

S: Take your cue from them. If they want to talk, let them talk Talk back, if they want. But, you know, the biggest problem with any kind of thing like that is you don't want to talk back if they just want to talk. And the last thing they want to hear is you anecdotes and your trying to talk to them. "Oh, I know just how you feel" or something like that. 'Cause you don't. Even if you've lost somebody yourself, you don't know how that person feels. Let'em talk. And if they want to be quiet, you be quiet with them. But a lot of people don't want to be quiet. They can't stand the silence. It's TV and radio.

I: Is that it, you think?

S: I think it's part of it. People don't like quiet. They don't like silence. Just the average person, I think, doesn't like it. And when they get in that kind of situation they feel uncomfortable. And they feel like they're missing something. There's something wrong here. Everybody's being quiet! And yet, to me, and this is something it took a long time for me to learn, I think I'm learning this even more as I go along—there are times when you want to be quiet. You need to be quiet, and you're better off if you just shut yourself up. Even if you're in a group. And if they can't handle that, that's their problem. They'd better learn. And maybe they ought to be quiet. It goes back to that experience I had at a workshop I went to about AIDS and I went to a session on meditation. I used to be not big on silence as a meditation thing. And that just blew me away. I still go back and think about that. That was a moment of silence in my life that the leader forced on me and I was not prepared for me. And it kind of reinforced this thing about silence, that a lot of times you need to be silent and open yourself up. And in grieving I think you need sometimes to be silent and just open yourself up. I don't think you close yourself. I think you kind of open yourself. Or you can—to the reality of what's happening, and to the possibilities that are there. And even thought they are painful. At the same time you close out some things, too. You don't want the chatter.

I: Do you think that's why so many people in our culture are uncomfortable with silence, because they might be opening themselves to pain?

S: Yeah. Well, I think most people don't want any kind of interior reflection, either. They don't want to look inside theirselves. If they're silent, what are they going to do? There's nobody there except them. And so they feel uncomfortable without all the superficial stuff. I say that like I'm a practiced person at that, and I'm not. But I see the value of it. And maybe not everybody handles it the same way. I mean, some people it's better for them to talk. I don't know. But I don't think people give themselves enough opportunity.

I: It would make sense to me that everybody would have the need for both.

S: At some point you do. At some point you do. And I think the best friend, the best counselor, the best supporter, whatever, is the person who is able to perceive at the moment what it is that the griever wants and needs and then react to that. If they want silence, then you let them be quiet, be silent. And if they want to talk, you let them talk. Because there is going to be both. My father was a very quiet person anyway. And he was kind of the opposite of me. I'm a talker. But when I want to be silent, I want to be silent. My father went for a couple of days not wanting to talk about my mother's death. But then, when he did, he just opened up completely. And it was absolutely amazing. I couldn't believe it.

I: That's sort of what Job did. Seven days of being quiet, and then—whoa!

S: I actually saw my father cry. And never in my life had I seen him cry. But he was raised that men don't cry.

I: So he cried during the time of not talking?

S: No. Well, he may have cried in private during that period of silence. He just went off and kind of retreated, and I respected that. But then this friend of mine came to visit, and he's a grief counselor, and just kind of felt him out a little bit, see how whether he wanted to talk or not. And I was just going to observe them. And my father just opened up and just cried and talked and my friend just sat there and let it happen. And then it was over. And it was almost like it hadn't happened. But I think it did my father a lot of good. He had to do it in his time. And my friend knew that. And I think that was what---remember where I lived, too, after my wife died---out in the country with no one around. I didn't know anybody. That was what was the hardest thing for me was I was in isolation in the very beginning. If I'd been back where I had friends I could call up or who might drop by it would have been better. It would have been a lot easier. You know, for people that are in grief, in makes a lot of difference if you have somebody that you can call, when you're ready to call, or who will call you and you can say, "Well, gee I'm okay" or "No, I don't want to go" and they will say "Okay." They won't give up on you. They'll check back with you, maybe in a couple of days or something. And they'll say, "Call me if you need me" or "Call me if you want to. . ." and then you do it when you're ready. But you've gotta have the people, and I didn't have the people.

I: What about—what is your opinion about the rituals and the customs that we do have in our culture around death and around grieving? Do you think that they are good ones and they do what they need to do, or do you think we've left behind in the past some rituals that would have been good for us to keep? Just what's your general feeling about what most of the time---I know we have a lot of different cultures within our culture, but just sort of mainstream America?

S: I can remember when people wore black. And they would wear it to the service. And then they would wear black for a period after that, maybe just a black armband or widows weeds kind of stuff. I don't remember that people did it that often, but I can remember people doing it occasionally. And it's still done in some cultures. But I think that's a loss. I think we expect people to be over grief very quickly and be back at work or back in the mainstream, and there's something wrong with them if they're not. There's no such thing—there's hardly anything left of community grief. Somebody suggested that one of the reasons for that is most people die in hospitals, or they die outside the home where earlier this century, even, people died at home. And there were people there. And there was a ritual involved in that. And we don't have that much anymore. That's what I like about a hospice program or something like that, where the hospice is in the home rather than a wing or a hospital or something, because people can die at home and there's a ritual involved in that, and there can be people present when that person dies. And that changes the whole complexity—the whole picture. Death has become very impersonal, I think, in this country. And you're expected to get back to work, and you're expected---I actually had a friend of mine come down to visit be about six or eight weeks after my wife died. He came down for some kind of library meeting and we had lunch. And he had something to the effect, "Oh, are you still grieving for you wife?" Or some kind of

almost flip remark. And I was stunned. And maybe somebody else would have been over it at six weeks. But I wasn't, thank you.

S: Well, somebody may have tried to be over it, pretended that they were, but I don't know that anybody ever really is.

I: I think that's what happens. A lot of people won't allow themselves any opportunity to grieve. We had a guy that came to the hospice support group for a while—and by the way, they didn't handle that well. And he was, "I don't need this. I knew she was gonna die. I was prepared for it." He was like seventy-five years old, and his wife had had cancer. And gosh they'd lived together for fifty years, and he's saying, you know---I think that was a lot of bluff.

S: You want to ask him, "Why are you here, then?" Why did he come?

I: I never asked him. Obviously he—

S: Something made him come there.

I: Yeah, something. No person, but something. And he came three or four times. In fact, he was still coming when I came out of the group. See, you were supposed to leave the group after a year. Well, in my case the group had only started six months before, so I actually only had six months of the group where right now a person could actually have a full year, which kind of irritated me. But that's another whole story. But when I conducted a grief support group in another town for a year, we had people come in and go out. They'd come in once or twice and then leave. And I don't know whether they felt that we weren't helping them or what. I also don't know what they were looking for. And everybody may be looking for something a little bit different. I don't know. And then we had people who went on and on and on and it became kind of a social club for them---come to support group and see your friends and have ice cream afterwards. At that point we decided to stop having the support group. They'd gone past the point---if they wanted to see each other, they could just go see each other. We weren't getting new people. But, anyway, to go back to your original question, our society in general does not give people the opportunity to grieve. You know, we have laws about sick leave. We have laws about child care. We have pregnancy leave and all these things. I think we ought to allow people to have grief leave. And more than just a few days. Now some people can get back in the mainstream faster. And for some people that is a way back, is through work or something. But they have to be careful not to fool themselves into thinking they're going to get over it through work. Some people it's gonna take longer. They're gonna need more time. Part of that is maybe just silence and withdrawing from the busyness. And we don't allow that. We don't allow it in our laws, and we don't allow it in our relationships. People expect you to be over it boom, boom, boom. And then they expect it of themselves, too, see. "Oh, well, my wife died, but I'm okay now. I've had two weeks." I'm not over my wife. I think about her every day.

I: And probably will for a while, I would guess. And you never get over it.

S: No, you never do get over it. Well, maybe if you didn't have any strong relationship with the person, if it was just a friend or you didn't care for the person, but if it was a real loved one, in the real sense of the word loved one, a child, spouse, even parent, yeah, you're never going to get over it. Your life is gonna be different. And you're gonna think about how different it is now than it was and what would it be like if she or he were still alive. That's what bothers me sometimes. And then I have to stop and maybe be silent or go talk to someone. And then I get back on track. Unfortunately, my work is constant grieving also. It might not have been the right thing for me to get into.

I: On the other hand, it may be a way for you to work it out.

S: That was my idea, I think, and that was why I got into AIDS work in the first place, because I had cared for her and I wanted to care for other people.

I: In hospice isn't it a rule that the volunteers have to have had someone close to them die, because nobody else could really do it?

S: But on the other hand, in hospice you have to wait a year. And I didn't want to wait a year. And I can sure see why. Because there's a certain fragility that develops in you at that point, you know, with the loss of a loved one. And you have to be able to step back, too, at some point and look at other people, you know, objectively. You've been there, but that's still another person.

Interview: 55-year-old male, grief professional

I: Last time we talked about your preference for speech or silence when you were grieving. But what I want to talk about today is—I just want you to talk about what grieving feels like, how you'd describe what it's like

S: Well in my case it was emptiness. I might be unique, because I lived out in the country. There wasn't anybody around and I really regretted that because I moved down here from a place where I had a lot of friends. But, looking back on it, I don't know that I would have taken advantage of those friends even then. They would've come to me. I could think of a couple who would. But I don't know that I would have gone to them. And I really retreated. I think it was partly deliberately. And that was scary because sometimes I just didn't know what I was going to do or what to do. And this what was so ridiculous is that I had experiences doing grieving counseling. I had training in it. I had a year and a half experience in it. And I couldn't handle it myself. I think all the teaching in the world doesn't really prepare you for it It just doesn't. It took me a long, long time to get through it. But I am now. But there's no way to prepare for it. I mean, I knew she was going to die for months, and yet I wasn't prepared for it. I wasn't prepared for it.

I: Even though there is no way to prepare someone, if you were talking to someone who had not ever experienced the death of somebody they cared about and you were trying to give that person a sense of what that might be like if it happened to them, how would you describe it?

S: How would I describe it to them? How would I describe the experience to them. I'm not sure how I would. That's a good question. There again I've been through it, I've been trained to think about it, I've been trained to work with people. I would tell people not to do what I did, not to retreat. To be prepared for a sudden emptiness, but then not let the emptiness get to them. It got to me. It got to me very seriously. I think grieving is a very personal process. But I think it's not a process that can be gone through alone. It should not be gone through alone. And I think people, if they know, for example, that a child or a spouse or even a close friend is going to die, they should begin to build, to establish some kind of a network to help them. And, like I said, when I lived in my old community I had that network. And I didn't have it down here. And I think that network would have come into. . .and I might have called those people and said, "Let's go get a beer" or something. But I know I can think of two or three or four of them who would have called me, who would have gone out of their way to call me. And I probably would have responded. I think to be prepared, to prepare yourself you need to prepare yourself for a tremendous loss. The world looks different. The world is going to look a lot different for a long time. But if you prepare yourself by keeping yourself in contact with other people. It can be a deep hole and it's very hard to get out. Some people never get out. Today on my lunch break I watched a Waltons episode-- I've rediscovered The Waltons—in which a woman had been grieving for years over a fiancé who died on the way to the wedding or something. Wouldn't leave her house. That was a story, but it's not that unrealistic. And that's exactly what was wrong with me. I was thinking about that today watching that show. I mean, I was out there in the country and if I hadn't had to go get mail and food once in a while I probably would not have left that house. And that was not good. It's not good. You've got to stay in reality. You've got to stay in the world, let the world stay with you. And if you talk to somebody about that ahead of time, maybe they won't believe you.

I: Okay. You were talking about The Waltons and that sort of leads into this next thing I was going to ask you, which is—and also because you have been trained to work with people who are grieving—what kinds of things to you think our culture says about what grieving is like? Either through the media, like television, or through grieving professionals or people who are trained to help. How do we talk about grief?

S: Well I think when I went through my experience of being trained it was very intensive. I came out of that feeling like I understood what grief is all about. And I think I did. And I think I did a pretty good job with working with other people in their grief And I found out that it was hard to work with myself. About the broader society—well there was an interesting comment in this show. The woman said, told Jason, said to him, "What would you do if someone you loved were suddenly taken away?" No, "replaced," that was it. Her parakeet or her canary died, that was it. And she didn't want to get

another one. And she said, "How would you feel if you died and somebody wanted to replace you right away?" And he said, "I would feel happy that they were still alive and willing to be alive, stay alive." I think that's a good point of view. And I think our society tends to look at it that way. You know, I think we try to get people back into the swing of things too quickly. And everybody's going to go at it their own way at their own pace. They're gonna get through their grief, or get to the point where they can take step number one, kind of get back into the swing of things, at their own pace. And we need to understand that. But I think society tends to look at it that way. But I think the problem is that society sometimes tries to get you back into it a little too quickly.

I: So is there a middle place there between what you're saying society does and what you said you did?

S: Oh, gosh, there's gotta be! But you know, I was thinking about this again today. Interesting coincidence that the Waltons show should start some of this thinking. I was thinking about a high school friend who died some years ago and her husband remarried within a year. And there's nothing wrong with that. But I kind of thought it was a little quick. There's gotta be balance between the lady that grieved for years and mine and then the society that says get back into the swing of things. I think he came back in too fast. I can't make a judgment about that. Would I ever have done that? No. But I came out of the grief process and back into the world. Yeah, there's a balance in there. But the balance is going to be dependent upon each individual. I've known people that have taken longer with their grief than I did. The person, if you've got somebody helping you, you've got a support group, I think they have to understand that it's gonna be different with each person. There may be general principles and procedures and therapies that apply to everyone in a general way, but I think it comes down to the individual people. They're gonna work at their own pace.

I: So you said that after you took the training that you took that you had a pretty good idea about what grief was about. So what was your idea about what grief was about?

S: Loss and restoration, I think. There's a loss, but there's got to be a restoration there. And you're not gonna restore the person lost, but you've got to restore the life of the person who's left. And that's what I think helping someone through a grief process is all about, and getting through the grief process yourself is a matter of restoring yourself. You're not gonna be able to get back to the way things were In my case my wife is dead but my life went on And she, I'm sure she was not happy with how I handled it for a long time there. Because she was a very lively person herself I think she was, and I say this in a very serious way, I think she was very upset with the way I was handling it But you've got the loss and you have to face the loss And anybody associated with you has to face that loss. The loss is---there's a restoration And you're not gonna get back to where you were. You're not gonna bring back the person who has died But you have to go on. And there are ways to keep that person alive in memory. And healthy ways. And I've seen people---I had a lady that I tried to work with when I was doing this grief counseling—I mean her husband died and within about a week she had got rid of all of his clothes, everything in the house that was associated with him. And then she started

having a lot of problems. I think she went way too far too fast. And before anybody could even help her, say, "Wait a minute. Are you sure you want to do this?" she'd done it. And then she had nothing but memories left. I think she went way too far, and she knew it.

I: So, thinking about those people that you worked with or, actually, just anybody that you know, how, can you think of any ways you've ever heard other people talk about grieving?

S: Talk about grieving?

I: Talk about what it's like for them, or tell you what it ought to be like for you.

S: Yeah, I know you're interested in the language aspect of this. Yeah, there's a lot of oughts in there. You ought to feel this way, you ought to feel that way. Which is kind of interesting because, yeah, maybe you ought to, but maybe you're not going to. Anger, I haven't mentioned anger. And you get a lot of angry language with people. I mean, people actually blame the person for dying. And that's what's amazing. I can't think of specific ways people do that, but they get really tensed up. You know, it's funny. They'll use words like "damn him" and, you know, we joke about that, but I've actually seen and heard people use that kind of language. And, gosh, I don't blame my wife. It wasn't her fault that she died. But I was angry, and I probably used the same kind of language at one time. But even with these groups that I used to work with there was a lot of that kind of language. And there's a lot of denial language, people that just didn't—you know, there's the stages. And you can revert back. Every once in a while I get really, it comes back. And that can be tough. You know, little things can set you, can cause that. An anniversary. And in fact, one thing that they teach you in grieving is be alert to somebody's anniversary coming up, and be there for them. And yet, you know, the funny thing is, this year is the first year since my wife died and the anniversary of her death just slipped right by me. I didn't realize it for several days. I even had it on my calendar. You can know I can talk about it now almost as if it never happened. But of course it did. I think you even get to the point where you can talk about it as something else that happened in your life. But I was real surprised when it just slipped by me. I was pleased. In a way I was kind of angry with myself for having forgotten, but then I got to thinking about it and I thought that's good. It's not out of me. I still think about her. I think about her---every day something makes me think about her. My life has become enriched in different ways since then. If you can get people to look at it this way, maybe you can help them. In my own case, I think that my life is not only different but in some ways a little bit better than it might have been. And I'm not saying that my wife and I wouldn't be happy now. But I'm doing things now that I would not have been doing. You know, if you can get somebody where they can actually look back and see a death, not as a benefit, but as a positive kind of thing, as a learning experience, as a movement forward, a different direction of their lives. And if you can do that yourself, which is what I think I've finally done. And I wouldn't go back to the town I lived in before now if you paid me! I think that's another life. You know deaths are real losses, whether it's a parent or a spouse or a child or a close friend or a partner. But if you can't figure out

some way to make some kind of gain out of that. . . .It's hard to convince people of that. Sometimes they just have to go through all the stages and then come back around again and again. And you an be there for them and with them but you can't do it for them. You know that. You've been through it with the loss of your mother. And you've been through it with other people. It helps in a way if the loss is one that's expected. I remember a woman who had her child with her, and went into the library to return a book and came back out and that child had died. And that was a devastating. . .I didn't even know how to begin to work with that woman. Totally unexplained and inexplicable. She just had an aneurysm or something. There's no way you can predict it. In the case of my wife I knew she was going to die and she and I prepared for it. That helps a lot. Of course, the bottom still fell out. But I tell you a sudden, unexpected death, especially a child, that's just unimaginable. This woman came to one meeting and then she just dropped out of sight. We had no idea what happened to her. She blamed herself. Do you have more questions?

I: Well, what I have is like a fill-in-the blank. You may have already sort of answered this, but what I want you to do is think of a word or a phrase or a picture, an image, that you could use to complete this sentence: Experiencing the death of someone you care about is like. . . .

S: Falling off a cliff. It's like falling without any sense of anybody being there to catch you or anything to stop you. No safety net.

I: There's one more of those. "The experience of grieving is like. . . ."

S: Now I have an image of being in water, and swimming kind of against the current. And not even, in my case anyway, not even seeing the land. I mean it's like somebody dumped me out in the middle of a lake or the ocean. And I can't see land and I'm trying to get there. And it's not that I'm drowning. It's just that I'm tired. Those are interesting images, aren't they? Falling and tiring in the water. But I think that's actually the way I felt during those months. In fact I didn't even begin to come out of it for at least a year.

Interview: 50-year-old female, clergy; 35-year-old female, clergy; 37-year-old female; 37-year-old female, clergy

I: I was wanting you to talk about what your own personal needs are, what you remember in a grieving situation, your needs for talking or being silent.

S1: I just remembei the day my daughter died. She died in the middle of the night. And the next day lots of people came. But there was one person there that I remember most vividly. He came and simply sat on the couch and was probably there for a couple of

hours. Never did say anything. And how powerfully comforted I felt. Even though there were other people coming and going and saying things and bringing things. His silent presence. . . .And I didn't know if it was the silence itself or if it was just knowing his capacity to care or what. But the silence seemed appropriate and I felt very comforted by it. Probably more comforted than anything else.

I: Did you---do you remember if you felt yourself a need to be silent?

S1: At that point---there are other times with other people who are in the most profound kind of pain where I feel like I don't want to say anything. And it's almost like you're standing on holy ground. So what is there to say? I remember another time, too, on the anniversary of my daughter's death, that I was with a friend who—it was the first time I'd been with a friend who didn't try to comfort me when I cried. I just cried and cried and cried and cried and cried. And he was just there for a while, and for a while held me, and I just knew it was all right. Very comfortable. And what it did in that instance was to create a space in which I felt comfortable being who I was and feeling the depth of my pain.

S2: I keep thinking of being in one of those rooms that they take families into at the hospital when they're going to tell them that somebody died with a woman who's husband was having surgery. We'd been there a long time, during his surgery and so forth, and then they called us into this room. And then we sat in there like two hours, just his wife and his adult children and me. And finally the doctor came in. We hadn't had any word. And the doctor came in and he just stood there and he kind of took a breath. And it was like he didn't need to say anything. He just looked at the woman and engaged her eyes. And he just stood there for a minute. He even drew a breath, and then just stood there. And then finally he said something like, "We just didn't make it." Or something like that. But it was just—I just keep thinking of that. It was just really—it was the most caring way I've ever seen a doctor talk. Because his emotional presence to the pain was so evident. It was really amazing.

S3: I think I've been real sensitive to speech and silence around grief. And the way I would describe it, the way it's felt is that people can use either speech or silence to avoid the grief. I mean a lot of times after losses or after a death, my sense is that I'm the only one for whom this is real. You know, it's that feeling of isolation, or being on this little social island. And this, and everybody else is either through awkward silence or else through a lot of speech that won't acknowledge it, that just tries to stay distracted. And so to me there's silence that's very present, and there's silence that's very absent. And present silence, where people are attending or acknowledging I think is usually as comforting or more comforting than speech. Because often speech can just get in the way. But my experience has been that not all silence is like that. Some silence is just a real looking past, an avoidance, a stigmatizing. Or pretending. . .And of course I've heard so many horror stories, you know, about the awful things people have said, that you just think, "Oh, I wish people would shut up." It may have a lot to do with who you are, too, how verbal. I think having people willing to listen is real healing, for me.

I: To listen while you talk about it?

S3: Um-hmm. Yeah, who are willing to tolerate that.

S1: I do remember that, too, we were at a church where there was a close community, but no one would ever talk about our daughter.

S3: Or say her name. Yeah, I hate that.

S1: And at some point I said something to somebody. I just said, "Hey, you know I really would like to talk about her. We're ready to talk about her." And he said, "Well, we're not. We're too close to it. It hurts too much still. We can't handle it. Maybe you can, but we can't."

S3: And my family is real good about that. Probably because they're so verbal anyway. But about remembering, or saying my daughter's name, or including her when we're talking about family stuff, or, you know. And my husband's family isn't like that at all. It's like she never existed. And it's just real, the difference is real marked. I don't know how that fits into speech---calling the name of the dead. There may be taboos in some cultures about that.

I: There are. In some Native American cultures you don't speak the name of the dead. And some of that has to do with the belief that there spirit is still around. And in some cultures there's a negative association with the spirits of the dead, so you don't want them around. And in a weird sense, we sort of have the same thing. There's a sense in which, in our culture, we don't talk about the dead because we fear the spirits of the dead in a different kind of way, because we just don't want them to remind us about death.

S4: I think there are other kinds of grief, too. Like when you talk about divorce. Trying to bring me into the conversation! I just remember needing a lot of silence, that so much for me of grief is private. And a lot of times if I knew I had to sit and cry, then I knew I had to find a place to be alone. It's like, you know you're gonna throw up, so you have to find a place. It's almost as urgent as that. You have to go the bathroom, so you have to find a place. At least it was for me. I could kind of feel it coming. You know, half an hour to two hours ahead, I knew. It was brewing like storm does. But the other part was some people can be present with words and silence in really helpful ways. I'm not really sure what makes it that way except that I think there are people who were able to relate to me as I am and without my role being the primary thing. There are some parishioners in a church who can relate as person to person, aside from all those other role expectations. And friends who just take me as I am.

S2: It's been real interesting to me to notice the balance of speech about what's going on as opposed to speech about, to get people's minds off of it. Like when one parishioner was dying I thought about this a lot. His family was really present to him in such healthy ways. And they would go in, and he talked more directly than anyone I've ever known

about his death approaching and all the different things he felt about that, and just didn't back down at all from facing that. But then there'd be times when people would sit there and talk about, it seemed to be shift back and forth between talking about him dying and talking about the tulips coming up, or, you know, just the everyday conversation kinds of things. It was just really interesting.

S5: I guess I wonder how much the one grieving sets the pace or the agenda for something like that, that there are some people who somehow just the enormity of it they're just struck dumb. Or other times I've felt compelled to say something. But it may not have been, where in the same situation silence would have served better.

S3: Yeah, I remember that feeling of almost sacrilege, and yet, it is, it's this juxtaposition of grief and ultimacy with just these everyday, "Oh, I saw this movie," and talking. It does almost feel like a sacrilege to even. . . .I can remember after my daughter died the first time I had a really good laugh. Maybe two weeks later, and almost feeling a sort of betrayal. And then, well of course it's not a betrayal. But, you know. . . .

S2: That's interesting. Because, just the last couple of months I've had so many friends die and then this one friend's death affected me very strongly. And just last night in the car when I was driving back I was listening to some of my favorite music and I started crying. And I cried for about an hour. And then I went home and it was real clear to me that it needed to be real quiet in the house. And I thought about putting music on. And I thought, "No. I want it to be completely quiet." And I was in a kind of despair that I sometimes have where there's just nothing good in life. Life is horrible and I just don't even want to live anymore. And part of what I have to do is just be in that for a while and then part of what I have to do is somehow reconnect with life going on. And so I'm glad that I had some other options than just to be in silence for several days. I'm glad that that silence had an end. It does almost seem to me like death is a, almost like a power, almost like a magnetic power that can cast a—I don't know what—a scope in which it has power. And I have to be in that a while and then I have to get out of it somehow. I can remember being in a hospital room with a man who was dying and the family was standing around talking about sports and things and the TV was going and I was just furious because I felt that it was such a betrayal of his dying. And he didn't die until they all finally got out in the hall.

S4: I think I'd want silence or singing. Either one when I'm dying—silence or singling. If people are there it'd be great if they just sang. A nice transition.

I: So what do you all think about the rituals and the customs that our culture has, such as they are, around death and grieving. And I know some of you are in places, with the services that you do for people, where you're creating new rituals. But typically, you know, the mainstream American culture, the stuff we do around death and funerals—do you think those rituals are for the most part good, or are they not enough? Are they adequate? Do we need new ones? Did we used to have better ones? What do you feel about that?

S1: A think what somebody said, you know, the man dying and the family talking about sports and having the TV blasting, I think maybe our culture doesn't know how to deal with death straight-on. And I find myself even, when I'm with a family and somebody's ill, and it's uncertain if it's terminal or not, whether the family is comfortable talking about their dying or if they want to talk about. . . .There's just some not knowing. How do you all handle that? Like, if there's been somebody that's pretty ill, and then. . . .

S2: I try and find out where the person—I try and take my cue from the person, regardless of what the family wants. If the person wants to talk about it.

S1: How do you find out?

S2: There's so many word cues. I was just telling a friend yesterday about a situation where a family got really, really angry with me because I talked real directly with the man. And he died within a few days and it's real clear that he was ready to die. And I walked in the room and this was someone I visited frequently. I knew he was very close to death. I walked in the room and I said, "So, how's it going?" And he said, "I'm ready to get out of here." And I said, "Oh. You're feeling like you've had enough of this, huh?" Or something like that. And just kind of intuitively felt around to make sure that I was clear of what he was talking about. And asked him how he felt about dying and in that case his mother, who happened to be in the room, was furious with me, furious, because---and she was praying with us just a little bit later And her prayer was, "Don't let him go yet. Let him hang in a few more days. You've got to do this for us. You can do this. You can make it a few more days." It was just cruel. You know I was thinking about rituals. We're getting ready to have this vigil for an execution Sunday night. And there'll be speakers and things. But then it will be silent---just candlelight and silence during the time of the execution. And I think that that's absolutely the only appropriate ritual at that point. I can't think of any---stillness and silence.

S3: Yeah. I think there is something about silence that really honors the grief and the- - yeah.

Interview 58-year old female, clergy; 43-year-old female; 56-year-old female, clergy; 41-year-old female, clergy

I: First if you could just talk about what you think grieving is like, describe it, either from your own experiences or as you've observed it in other people.

S1: Well, it's a roller coaster. I guess I think that's true both for me and other folks I've known who've grieved. Then as you get further in the process, the peaks and valleys get farther apart. But they never change in how high and how low they get. It's still as painful and euphoric as it ever was.

S2: I'd say it's an ache that pulls me deeper into life, that becomes a part of me. It gives me eyes to see things I couldn't see anymore. There's almost a giddiness involved in it. It's so bizarre to be so bereft that everything's open—the world can be like anything. It's like a Magic Slate where you lift it up and the world can be like anything. It's almost exciting.

S3: It seems to me that it's almost as if grieving were another entity in my life. It seems to have a life of its own. It kind of alters you. It's something you have to take account of whatever you think or do, sometimes very present, in your face and other times you don't notice it so much. Also it's a growing and changing thing. The acuteness of grief gets less, gets more like an ache. But it doesn't go away. And you don't much control over it.

S4: I would describe grieving as a rend or rip in the fabric of reality. Things are tattered and have to be woven back together again, maybe in new ways. There's a lot of new openness. When my friend died recently my grief was like a hug deep wound, a gash. It was like that for the first week. Then it begins healing, it scabs over. But you always have the scar.

S2: I remember that grief was isolating in the early stages. It's surreal, a reality no one else sees or participates in or even acknowledges. I thought, "How can these people go on with their lives when my life's falling apart?"

S4: It's almost something as organic as a disease. Grief is a thing, an entity that speaks to me. Or maybe it's like cloud. Recently I had to go and be with a family whose son had committed suicide. And there was so much physical manifestation of heaviness, so much physical pain.

S3: Sometimes when I feel real pain like that I just want to cry. I think I'm picking up on others' pain.

S2: You know grief is sneaky. That's where the disease model breaks down. It's not gradual and progressive like healing. It's not like a trajectory forward.

S1: I think people with a faith stance can do the Magic Slate thing easier. You know, they know somewhere that it's all going to be okay. I will survive. Maybe it will even be better. You are able to see opportunity there.

S4: And there's really almost a relief in having experienced the thing that is most horrible. It's like it's no longer a specter that is out there.

S3: I know when my daughter died it felt like an immense blindness. There was this deep, deep hole but there was something in the hole. I wasn't alone. I think it also sometimes opens up your being.

S2: Grief seems to me like a hollowing out. That's an image that was used at my daughter's funeral. It opens us up, empties a place that can actually open to joy.

S3: When my older daughter was a senior in high school she came home and told me about a chapel service they had had at school for a child. She said during it she started crying and just couldn't stop. And she realized she was grieving for her little sister, who had died when she was in about 3rd or 4th grade. So then she wrote a poem about that experience and in it she said something about how children grieve when they get ready.

Interview – 70-year-old female

I: In your own experience in times of grieving, has your need been to be quiet—to maybe be by yourself and be quiet—or to be with somebody and talk, or maybe both at different times?

S: I think both. One of the things that I notice, and I'm sure everybody goes through this. I had always—I'd never really—of course there was Mama and Daddy, but they were not people that you were with every day. And I've noticed that people avoid talking about them, or the fact that they're---of course, they sympathize with you, but they don't want to—I guess it's because they don't want to remind you of it, as though you could forget. But my feeling was, I was always glad when somebody mentioned my husband, or asked about how he died. It seems to me that the more you can talk about it and relive it, the better for you it is than if you just try to forget about it.

I: Do you remember, was there ever a time, right after your husband died or any time, that you wanted to be by yourself?

S: Yeah, there were times. Of course I've always been kind of that kind of person anyway, wanting to be by myself. But, yeah, I think so. I can't remember specifically what they were, but just there are times when you need to be by yourself, I think.

I: When people would come to the house, do you remember if most of the people talked a lot, or were there people that were just kind of there but didn't say much, or was it kind of a mixture?

S: I think most of them talked. Not necessarily about him, or the situation, but I really can't remember too much about what they said or even who came. Not a lot. Of course, I couldn't remember what I wore to the funeral, either. I guess you're in sort of a daze.

I: Other cultures.....Do you think that we have anything in our culture that corresponds to that, where we have some type of approved silence that's connected with grieving, or do you think we're just, we're talkers?

S: I can't think of anything that we have that I have experienced. Except the fact that a lot of people avoid talking about it. And I don't know if it's—it's hard for them to do, I think. A lot of people just find it hard to express anything about how they feel or know what to say to you. That's the hard thing for most people and so most people just avoid it. But I don't think that is necessarily anything to do with our culture, it's just a---well, it may be something about our culture that avoids death. Speaking about it, or even thinking about it.

I: What about the rituals that we have, the customs that we have today in our culture around death or grieving, funeral customs, the kinds of things everybody does, usually. Do you think those are good customs and that they accomplish what they need to accomplish, or did we used to have better ones, or what?

S: Well, I don't know. Name some specific customs and I'll see if I. . .

I: Well, the way we do funerals, and people bring you food, and having visitation at the funeral home. Some of those are not that customary any more. But, used to, there were a lot more. Like people wore black for a year, and put a wreath on the door, those kinds of things. But anymore probably mostly just having some kind of funeral, and people bringing food to the house, and people remembering with cards and everything.

S: Yeah. I think those are very good customs And I think they help a lot. Because it makes you feel more loved, or he was, anyway. I was amazed at how many people came to the funeral. Of course, a lot of them were my children's friends, but, even so, they took time to do that, and I think that was, I think that makes the family feel better. And the food part is great, both because it comes in handy and because it's also an expression of their caring. I think they're good customs. I know people who say they don't want a funeral, but I think it's a good thing to have a funeral. It sort of puts the finishing touches to it. It ends the---well, it doesn't end the period of grief, by any means, but it ends the sort of formal part of it. It kind of puts it to rest, and you get to give a eulogy for the person, appreciation and so on. I think they're good customs. I would not want to just be put in the ground and forgotten.

I: There are more people today I think just not doing funerals, I think.

S: I think there are a lot of people who just don't—I'm not sure what their feeling is. I'm thinking specifically of my sister. She can hardly bear the thought of anybody in the family dying. She just really, really had a hard time with Daddy when he died I don't know why. I don't know why these experiences are things she can't get through. Maybe she doesn't have enough religion—faith, or whatever. Or maybe it's because she lives a long way from all the family and she wants to hold on to what she has of them. But she's never wanted to have a funeral or any kind of ceremony like that.

I: You mean for herself?

S: Uh-huh, for herself. I don't know what it is.

I: One person I interviewed said one of the reasons we are uncomfortable with death is because people don't grow up around it any more—people don't die at home. She said three things are changing that—the hospice movement, the AIDS epidemic, and the crisis in health care. She thinks dying at home will become much more common again. And she thinks we'll probably create new rituals to replace the ones that have died out.

S: She's probably right. I was the same way, though, about my children. People don't get their children into it—small, young children. In general they sort of avoid talking about death to children, so they don't grow up with it. Like my youngest son has just kind of had a horror of not only everybody else's, but his own death, all his life. And I don't know where we went wrong there. He's just not comfortable with it at all. Well, nobody wants to die—well, most people don't want to die. But it's something that some people really have a horror of, of being around it. I don't know why. My sister-in-law has been like that. She would never go see people in the funeral home. It's interesting to think about all the psychological part of it. She lost her mother when she was really young. Maybe it went back to that. Probably she never did see her mother. Because I heard my husband's aunt talk about it. I can't remember if it was my husband or his sister. It must have been his sister. She said that she kept asking for her mother, later. And she finally said to her something like, "Would it make you feel better if you knew she was never coming back?" And that seemed to make it better, satisfy her.

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 5/7/02

Date: Tuesday, May 08, 2001 IRB Application No AS0162

Proposal Title: JOURNEYING TOWARD HEALING A LOSS: THE LANGUAGE OF GRIEVING

Principal Investigator(s):

Susan Ross
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Perkins, OK 74059

Richard Battleiger
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Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI:

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 203 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Susan A. Ross

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: THE LANGUAGES OF GRIEVING: SILENCE, TALK AND METAPHOR

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Lawton, Oklahoma on Sept. 18, 1949, the daughter of Hoke Smith Ross, Jr. and Janice Hobbs Ross.

Education: Graduated from Lawton High School, Lawton, Oklahoma, in May 1971; received Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in May 1971. Received Master of Divinity degree from Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri in May of 1975. Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts degree with a major in English at Oklahoma State University in December, 2001.

Experience: Employed as teacher and substitute teacher, Kansas City, Missouri, public schools; pastor in various United Methodist Churches throughout Oklahoma; adjunct instructor in composition at Oklahoma City University; graduate research assistant and teaching assistant at Oklahoma State University; Bereavement Coordinator at Judith Karman Hospice in Stillwater, Oklahoma; intake worker at Stillwater Domestic Violence Shelter

Professional Membership: National Council of Teachers of English