LOSING A PARENT TO DEATH IN CHILDHOOD:

STORIES OF CHEROKEE CULTURE

AND GRIEF

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Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
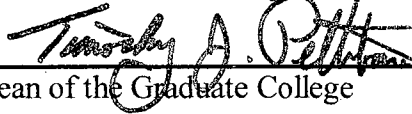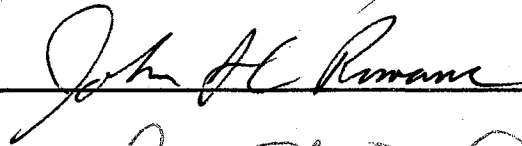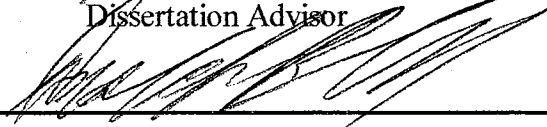the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
December, 2001

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Dissertation Approved:

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Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank my committee who were all supportive and involved in the completion of the project. Drs. Winterowd, Romans, and Chaney, I feel honored to have had you as members. Thank you for your valuable contributions. A special thanks to Dr. Boswell, who was always a constant support, academically and personally, and who was also a whole hell of a lot of fun. But, most of all, I would like to thank Marie Miville, Ph.D. not only for her support with the dissertation, but throughout my education at OSU. I consider her a teacher, a mentor, and a friend.

Second, a very special thank you to my colleague and dear friend, Rhonda Johnson. We came to this school together, and we finished together. Without her editing, advice, consolations, encouragement, and support, it certainly would have been more difficult to complete this project.

Third, I would like to thank my mother and father who have, without conditions, supported me emotionally, spiritually and financially throughout my life, and especially through my higher education. I absolutely could not have done this without you.

Finally, I would like to thank Dianna and Maci Conaway who put up with long hours, cranky moods, and thousands of rewrites and edits, all taking away from our time together. Maci is the reason for everything that I have done and will do.

I love you all.

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CHAPTER I

"Only in childhood can death deprive an individual of so much
opportunity to love and be loved and face him with so
difficult a task of adaptation. We cannot compare mourning
in children and adults without taking this into account."
---Erna Furman, 1974 p. 12

INTRODUCTION

One of the most profound losses a human can experience is the death of a loved

one. Each of us, at some point in our lives, will likely experience the painful loss of a

loved one. Each of us will also struggle to come to terms with our own mortality.

Perhaps, though, no loss is more profound than the loss of a parent while still in the

childhood years (Palombo, 1981). So great is the impact of such a loss, the effects are

felt into the adult years, often for the length of the child's life. Statistics inform us that

nearly 6% of the population of children (under the age of 18) will experience the death of

a parent (Palombo, 1981). Of those losses, 67% will be the death of the father. Many of

the deaths will be expected (e.g. lengthy illness) but many others will be sudden. Either

way, the life of the child, and the structure of the family will be forever altered.

For many years, researchers studied bereavement using adult subjects, assuming

that their results generalized to the child population (Welner, 1978; Otnow-Lewis,1981;

Werry, 1987) and treated children who were grieving with the same techniques that they

would treat an adult. Fortunately, others suggested that the results may not be a "one size

fits all" and that generalizations to children from the adult population may not accurately

depict their experiences (Lefkowitz & Tesiny, 1980; Berger,1983; Malmquist, 1983;

Ostrander, Weinfurt, & Nay, 1998). A person, who while in the adult years, who suffers

the loss of a loved one may grieve "differently," may experience the death in a

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completely different way than a person who experiences the loss of a loved one while in the childhood years. Children it seems, experience the loss in a profound way. Erna Furman writes:

> It is very difficult to construct a single theoretical model that unifies all the different approaches and serves to explain the many diverse clinical pictures. These difficulties limit our understanding of adult mourning but are even more pronounced in our attempts to assess bereavement reactions in childhood (1974, p. 239).

Research also has revealed that studies conducted on Euro-Americans (usually males who are attending college) may not accurately reflect the experiences of persons from other cultures who may hold varying beliefs and values and who may have experienced differing customs while growing up (Pettle & Britten, 1995; Shapiro, 1996). For example, children in Western culture may experience depression as the most common symptom of bereavement, while children of other cultures may not. Further, Native American children with culturally different grieving practices may experience difficulty when seeking social support from the dominant culture in addition to depression (Oltjenbruns, 1998). For example, Native American children may experience difficulty in the school setting, especially if English is a second language. The child's classmates and teachers may not attend, or even be aware of, culturally influenced events, such as wakes, dances, or gatherings meant to honor the dead. Their lack of knowledge of Native practices could serve to alienate the child who misses school in order to attend these events, or who wishes to discuss the event later. Native Americans who are grieving often attend events, but do not participate out of respect for the dead person for whom they grieve, sometimes for 6 months to a year, or more. This is not a common

practice among dominant culture, where "getting back into life" is considered a healthy response, conflicting with the Native cultural expectation.

Unfortunately for persons living among cultures different from their own, this social support from the dominant culture still seems to be a very important element in terms of adaptation after the grieving process, especially into adulthood (Oltjenbruns, 1998).

Death is not by any means the only manner in which a child can "lose" a parent. Parents are separated from their children for a variety of reasons, including divorce, separation, adoption, and illness, to name a few. The loss of a parent due to divorce, illness, or geographic separation may leave a spark of hope within the child, a chance for reconciliation. The loss of a parent for any reason can be devastating, but death is permanent and often unexpected (given that parents of young children are often young themselves) and may trigger the most intense grief responses in children (Oppawsky, 1997). The trauma of such a life event is likely devastating to the entire family, but the children seem to be especially effected (Camper, 1983; Pettle & Britten, 1995). Indeed, the earlier the age of the child at the time of the death of the parent, the more impact the loss makes on the child's life, even into adulthood (Furman, 1966; Handford, Mattison, Humphrey & McLaughlin, 1986).

The literature has provided evidence that children who have lost a parent to death may experience a variety of setbacks academically, socially, and emotionally (Camper, 1983). Some children are able to cope with the loss in more productive ways than are other children. If the child is a member of a minority group that differs significantly in culture and tradition from the dominant culture, the negative experiences of loss may be

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exacerbated (Shapiro, 1996). Unfortunately, grieving methods that deviate from the accepted cultural norm (i.e. depression and sadness, followed by "breaking bonds" with the deceased and "getting on" with life) may be pathologized (Stroebe, Gergen, Gergen, and Stroebe, 1992; Choney, Berryhill-Paapke & Robbins, 1995). The individual practicing minority culture sanctioned grieving methods may find little social support outside his or her own culture, exacerbating the negative grief response (Gray, 1987; Pettle & Britten, 1995). Unfortunately, many studies have focused on the grief process of children, but few studies have focused on the effects of culture and ethnicity as a vital part of the process (Oltjenbruns, 1998). And while a few studies were reviewed comparing Mexican-American people to Anglo-American people (Oltjenbruns, 1998), no studies were found that focused upon the unique grieving processes of Native Americans. Differences among cultures in the grieving process are clearly important aspects that should be considered by the practicing mental health professional and other professionals when assisting the individual cope with bereavement (Shapiro, 1986).

Little information is currently available on the grieving process of Native American peoples. Some anthropologists have studied ancient tribal Indians, such as the Mayan Indians, whose cultures no longer exist (Steele, 1977), for insight into their customs and rituals surrounding dying, the death process, and grieving for Native American people today. The Mayan culture utilized dramatic stories and legends that held the weight of truth for the people. When a person entered the dying process, the family acted out the culturally prescribed rituals of death, burial, and bereavement. The entire process of dying was viewed as the final journey of life, natural and appropriate.

Death was not feared, but celebrated. The entire family and members of the community participated in the rituals.

In contrast, Steele (1977) writes that Western society views death as almost "unnatural" and something to be avoided. Westerners may even go so far as to attempt to "negate and repress the facts" of death (Ammon & Hamlister, 1975). Feifel (1959) writes, "In the presence of death Western culture by and large has tended to run, hide and seek refuge in group norms and actuarial statistics. The individual face of death becomes blurred by embarrassed curiosity and institutionalization." (p. xii)

Unfortunately, because members of Western society have learned through the customs of their culture to "repress" or "deny" death, they may not be readily able to understand or accept alternate ways of grieving without interpreting them in a negative or biased manner (Oltjenbruns, 1998). When this occurs, it may unnecessarily complicate the grieving process for the Native American person who must interact with Westerners.

Native Americans possess strong cultural ties to family and family members, exhibiting strong emotional and developmental bonds to not only close family members (mother, father, siblings) but to extended family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) as well (Sue & Sue, 1990; Locust, 1988). This increased emotional and cultural bond to family may intensify the sense of loss after the death of a parent. The child becomes deprived of the direction and teachings of the parent, and in a sense loses a tie to his or her own ancestral history since many of the traditions and rituals of the tribe are passed verbally from one generation to the next.

Statement Of The Problem

Little research has been conducted examining the alternative grieving and bereavement customs of cultures other than Western culture. This is especially true of the modern day practices of traditional Native Americans who are virtually unrepresented in the scientific literature. There have been numerous studies, experiments and corresponding models of grief that have been developed to help us, as readers and clinicians, to understand the processes of grieving that a person experiences following the loss of a loved one. However, these models have assumed that the grief experience is similar for all people, regardless of age, gender, cultural background, and experience. In response, this study seeks to provide an initial look at a group of Native American people, all from one tribe, who consider themselves traditional in their ways, who experienced the loss of a parent to death while they were children.

Of particular interest to this study, is how each of the participants' concept of traditionality, or their adherence to tribal customs, ways, values and/or beliefs, interacted with the dominant culture customs, ways, values, and/or beliefs following the death. As one of the first studies to examine specifically the role of Native American culture on the grieving process, it is hoped that some insight can be gained into the participants' unique experiences.

There is a further noticeable lack of information in the existing literature about the mourning and grieving process of Native American people, especially children. No studies were found by the current researcher that addressed the needs of tribal members of the Cherokee Nation experiencing the grief process. It is hoped that information learned from the current study may provide insight into ways to meet the needs of Native

American children who are grieving, without pathologizing or categorizing their accepted and expected traditional ways of grieving.

The current study was qualitative in nature, and used an in-depth interview format It is important to note that a qualitative study may provide information that is not generalizable beyond the case study. However, the in depth interview format of the study, as Bower (1997) suggests, allow the "voice" of the participant to be heard clearly; an important design aspect for examining a previously unexplored topic. The reader is cautioned that the results of the study are not intended to represent all Native American people and/or tribes. The "voices" that this study focused upon were from one tribe, and reflected the experiences of the participants included in the study. The interviewees were from the Cherokee Nation, a tribe whose practices and traditions are unique from other Indian tribes (LaFromboise, Berman, & Sohi, 1994; Trimble & Fleming, 1989), and are not intended to be representative of all tribes.

Specifically, the questions asked in this study were:

1. What are the traditional grieving practices of the tribe? What role do traditional values play in the grieving process?

2. Was the person able to seek out adequate social support resources to assist in the grieving process? What were these sources?

3. Did the person perceive a sense of misunderstanding from members of the dominant society in terms of grief response? If so, how did it affect the person in relation to the personal grief process?

Theoretical Framework

Kubler-Ross's (1969) impact upon the study of death related issues is undeniable. Prior to her landmark writing, research in the area was nearly non-existent (Retsinas, 1988). She proposed a five stage model for grieving based upon her own observations and research with cancer patients that included denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and then acceptance. These five steps of grieving in terms of historical importance in the field can be compared to Freud's work in psychoanalysis. In 1980, nearly 60% of the medical schools in United States used her model to help train doctors to deal with grief issues.

Not unlike followers of Freud's model, followers of Kubler-Ross's model have been zealous, at times, refusing to stray from their strict and literal interpretation of the stages. This is especially noticeable in the medical profession, who adopted her work to the letter, who is still teaching this theory in most medical schools today as the dominant model of grieving. It may not have been Kubler-Ross's intentions to adopt her stages in such a literal and linear fashion, and new movements in grieving research are reflecting this new conceptualization of an old theory. These modifications have led to evolving changes, including a less linear approach to the stages. The new conceptualizations of this model may actually be more reflective of many Western people's grief experience which may likely include, at some point, parts of each of the stages. However, not every person will experience all of the stages, and certainly not always in the chronological order she described. It is more likely that the experience of the stages will be idiosyncratic, perhaps involving some going back and forth between anger and denial, or having a brief period of anger followed directly by sustained acceptance. The

combination of possibilities is endless. Newer models of grief include the rational and spiritual elements in Kubler-Ross's model, like denial and acceptance, without the rigid, inflexible interpretation of the linear model(Retsinas, 1988).

Though there have been many models postulated concerning the grieving process, Shapiro (1996) approaches the topic from a more integrated approach that incorporates not only the individual, but also the social context of the person's existence. Shapiro uses a developmental framework recognizing the sometimes subtle differences in experience and age that clearly affect behavior. Regardless of the specifics of a culture's ritual, members of that culture move along a developmental process and they learn and incorporate the beliefs and teachings of their people. The social developmental model of grieving is well suited for analyzing alternative methods of grieving, such as those practiced by Cherokee Indians.

Much of Shapiro's (1996) research focused upon anthropological studies that sought to provide insight into the beginnings, or basis, of various cultural belief systems. She contends that the grief experience exists only within the frame of the social context of the individual and of level of development in terms of age and experience. So ingrained, so important is this issue of social context that in her opening paragraphs she admonishes grief counselors reading the study to remain mindful of their own cultural frames when interpreting any data, either from the research or when working with clients of diverse backgrounds.

Shapiro (1996) suggests that the researcher/clinician respect the individual, or the family, as the "expert" or "best authority" on their own cultural assessment and coping skills, and instead act more as a facilitator than a teacher when working with

participants/clients in the grief process. She cautions readers to closely scrutinize their verbiage in terms of "good grief" and "bad grief," being careful not to pathologize that which they are not aware of or that they do not understand when viewing through their own cultural lens.

Significance of Study

The grieving process and the necessity of a strong social support network is well documented in the literature, at least for Anglo-Americans of Western ethnicity (Oltjenbruns, 1998). The absence of this network may result in negative adaptations, such as depression, that endures longer than might be expected from the grieving process itself (Oltjenbruns, 1998). However, for non-Westerners, such as those identifying with an ethnically diverse culture, the relationship may be different (Shapiro, 1996). It is possible that the grieving process of a child from an ethnically diverse group, such as the Native Americans in this study, may be culturally informed to experience their own grief in a way that is not well understood by the majority culture (LaFromboise, 1988; Shapiro, 1996). This lack of understanding, when experienced by the minority person, may complicate the healthy progression of grieving.

The significance of this study is that this study is one of the first, if not the first, in the literature to examine the specific grieving experiences of Native American adults from a specific tribe who, as children, lost a parent to death. The unique traditional grieving practices of the Cherokee tribe used in the study may be perceived as divergent from more traditional Western grieving practices. Past research in the area that focused upon Native Americans incorporated Indians from many tribes, lumping them without discretion or distinction into one group (O'Nell, 1989). The "group" data was then

analyzed. Given the varied and distinct tribal customs and values of the Native Americans, the results likely did not accurately represent the Native American population (O'Nell, 1989). This study focused upon one tribe, the Cherokee Nation, and was limited to the tribal customs and rituals that have been spoken over time to its people. The results of the study may not be applicable to all Native Americans, and it likely may be impossible to design a study that accurately described so diverse a group.

One researcher stated that in the area of bereavement counseling, perhaps above all others, the importance of being culturally sensitive is the most obvious (Shapiro, 1996). The need for culturally knowledgeable and culturally sensitive counselors is critical to the process. Shapiro states that even when working with a family who by all accounts appears highly acculturated to dominant society, the need for recognition and acceptance of alternative cultural grieving rituals exists. In times of critical life changing events and stress, such as the death of a loved one, families and individuals may be more likely to draw upon what another researcher called "ideological ethnicity" (Harwood, 1981). This is the individual's belief system that, though not fundamental to everyday life, is a "deep reservoir" of cultural beliefs that allow the person to "make sense of important life events." This reservoir may not be visible on a daily basis, or easily accessed through standard measures of assessment of events.

Definition Of Terms

Acculturation: A process of cultural change and adjustment that a person experiences when ongoing contact is made with a different culture. It usually does not include integration on an equal level (Keefe & Padilla, 1987).

Assimilation: The complete integration of an individual at social, economic, and political levels in society with equal power in each of these areas (Keefe & Padilla, 1987).

Catharsis: From the psychoanalytic literature originating with Sigmund Freud. In the death literature, it usually represents the act of outwardly expressing negative emotions and feelings surrounding the death of a loved one, then working through the pain to a place of acceptance of the death (Camper, 1983; Retsinas, 1996).

Culture: Pertains to the customs values, traditions, products, and sociopolitical histories of the social groups that exist within its limits. Culture is the worldview of the dominant society in a given geographical area (Helms, 1990).

Culture Stress: Psychological impact of adaptation to a new culture (Padilla, Olmedo, & Loya, 1982).

Complicated Grief: A grief process that extends beyond a reasonable amount of time, where the person experiences excessive sadness and/or depression that affects their ability to continue effectively with their lives (Shapiro, 1986).

Dominant Culture: The culture of the majority of persons who are considered to be in power, in a given area. In the United States of America, the dominant culture is considered Anglo-American.

Ethnicity: Social identity based on the culture of one's ancestors' national or tribal groups as modified by the demands of the culture in which one's group currently resides (Helms, 1990). Ethnicity is a construct taught and learned through the generations and is either accepted or rejected as an identification by the individual.

Grief: "Psychic pain attendant upon the work of mourning" (Palombo, 1981)

Mourning: "The set of internal adaptations a person makes in the moderately brief period of time following the loss through death of a significant person in order to integrate the changed reality he or she confronts" (Palombo, 1981).

Qualitative Interview: "Seeks qualitative knowledge expressed in normal language, it does not aim at quantification" (Kvale, 1996).

Racial Identity: Quality or manner of one's identification with a respective racial group (Helms, 1990).

Social Skills: Skills that are predictive of important social outcomes for children (Strain, Guralnich, & Walker, 1986).

Successful mourning: "A process of establishing and consolidating consistent, non-ambivalent, symbolic representations of the object which facilitate the full acceptance that the object is no longer physically available" (Blatt, 1961, p. 150)

Worldview: Composed of attitudes, values, opinions, and concepts that affect how we think, make decisions, behave, and define events (Sue & Sue, 1990).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The painful experience of the death of a loved one is an experience that all

humans must eventually face. However, it has been theorized that no loss is more

profound than the loss of a parent while still in the childhood years (Furman, 1966;

Palombo, 1981; Handford, Mattison, Humphrey & McLaughlin, 1986). The loss of a

parent for any reason, such as divorce or illness, can be devastating, but death is

permanent and often unexpected and may trigger the most intense grief responses in

children (Oppawsky, 1997).

While many studies have been conducted that examined the bereavement process

among Euro-Americans as subjects, relatively little research have been conducted with

people of non-Western cultures. There have also been relatively few studies conducted

on children who are grieving, regardless of the child's culture (Pettle & Britten, 1995;

Shapiro, 1996). Recent research reveals that the studies conducted on Western

individuals, often males, may not accurately reflect the experiences of people from other

cultures, and particularly children (Shapiro, 1996). Non-Western individuals may have

learned different ways of grieving and practices that have been passed down for many

generations. For example, some Native American grieving rituals have been practiced

since before the United States was founded, and are still practiced today. These grieving

rituals are often quite different than those studied.

This chapter will review the existing literature relevant to the bereavement

process, including an examination of various models of grieving, such as the well- known

Kubler-Ross (1969) stage model that pioneered the study of the bereavement for many.

This study conceptualizes the grieving process of Cherokee Indian adults who lost a parent to death as children from within the Social Developmental Model (SDM) by Shapiro (1986). SDM incorporates the unique qualities of the individual's social experience (including culture) along with the individual's unique developmental process during grief.

The first sections of the chapter focus upon the historical and cultural aspects of the grieving process. This includes research taken from a variety of sources including psychological, educational, sociological and anthropological studies. It provides a brief history of grief in diverse cultures. It also provides a review of literature suggesting that diverse grieving practices as sanctioned by a minority culture, may not be well received within the dominant Western culture and the implications for the individual.

The next section examines several of the most widely known models of grief. Using these models as a theoretical base, the chapter will then describe studies that looked at a common symptom, or result, of complicated grief. The literature in this section focuses primarily on studies using children as subjects who have demonstrated depressive symptomology. The section on children and depression is followed by a general review of empirical studies of children who are bereaved.

Brief Historical Overview of the Cherokee Nation

The story of the Cherokee begins before the written record was kept. Artifacts have been located by archeologists dating back to 9000 B.C. that are assumed to be from the Cherokee people (Duncan, 1998). Originally, it is believed that the Cherokee may have at one time lived near the Great Lakes area based upon language similarities with Native tribes still inhabiting that region of the land today (Woodward, 1963). Some

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historians have theorized that the Cherokees may be one of the "Lost Tribes of Judah" though no connection has been proven, it remains a legendary tale of the people (Ehle, 1988). Ehle writes that an Irish trader James Adair, who lived among the Cherokee in North Carolina, became convinced that the Cherokees were indeed one of the lost "Lost Tribes." He wrote many papers and articles on the subject where he explained his rationale for the belief. Most of this rationale was based upon his knowledge of the Cherokee way of life including traditional dances, ceremonies, dialects, and rituals, which were extremely similar to those rituals and ceremonies that had been written about the Lost Tribes.

What is known in history, however, is that many members of the tribe, though not generally considered nomadic, moved southward into the Appalachian Mountain region where they remained for hundreds of years (Duncan, 1998). This includes the North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee land area in the Appalachian Mountains, especially around the part known as the Great Smoky Mountains. Woodward (1963) notes five important events throughout history that molded the Cherokee people.

The first major event occurred around the year 1540 when the Spanish began to attack and "plunder" the peaceful people. This initial (as far as history has recorded) contact with the "White" man, led to many changes in the tribe, including the change from peace loving people to war-like protectors of their land. Prior to this event, the Cherokees had been content living in the mountains and sustaining their own people, rarely interacting with other tribes. The terrain they settled in was difficult and mountainous and provided seclusion from their neighbors. The Cherokees now began to

believe that they needed to protect themselves from others, and especially the "White man."

Second, Woodward (1963) states that the treaty with England signed in 1730 greatly affected the Cherokee. All the newly "discovered" and settled lands, including the Indian land (the Cherokees themselves did not regard themselves as "owners" of the land), were now considered to be part of the English Empire and the Cherokee people were now considered English subjects. This was another negative experience with the "White" man for the Cherokees.

Third, as tensions grew between the Settlers and the English empire, war became inevitable, and the Revolutionary War began within only a few years. After the Settlers won their freedom from the English, they turned their attention to the land, and the country they believed they had "won" in the war with the English. This of course, included the lands inhabited by the Cherokees. Not wanting English-ruled people in or near their own developing country, the Americans, in1785, signed a treaty with the Cherokees releasing them from British rule and establishing harmony between the Cherokee and the Americans. Though this peace treaty was to be relatively short-lived, the Cherokees believed they could not return to life as it had been before, but were now forced to co-exist with White Americans who lived to the Northeast.

Fourth, the single most tragic and significant event in Cherokee history culminated in the year 1838 when the United States federal government, led by President Andrew Jackson, forced the Cherokees from their native lands in the Appalachians to a barren land in the West, now known as Oklahoma. The Cherokee people were rounded up by government officials, placed in stockades (prisons) until the gathering was

complete, and then marched across unknown and rugged lands to Indian Territory (IT).

As many as four thousand of the Cherokees died on the trip West according to most

historians, though the government officially claimed the number to be around one

hundred (Woodward, 1963). This march West later came to be known as the Trail of

Tears.

For generations after this government mandate, Cherokees were forced, albeit

unofficially, to leave the North Carolina-Georgia area for Oklahoma. The current

researcher's great grandmother was forced by local law officers to leave her home, her

family business and her land in Georgia to come to Oklahoma in the late 1800's. The

government promised she and her family land in Oklahoma if she would move, though

there was really little choice for her in the matter. (For those interested in reading further

of the story of the oppression of the Cherokee in the state of Georgia, please read Chapter

VIII of noted historian Grace Steele Woodward's book, The Cherokees.) Upon arriving

in Oklahoma she and the family settled in Adair County, near the Arkansas border, where

some members of the family remain today.

Fifth and finally, the Civil War greatly impacted the Cherokee people. Though

most of the Cherokees living in the Appalachian Mountains were forced to move to

Indian Territory (Oklahoma), many evaded the removal by hiding in the mountains or

faking "White" (Woodward, 1963; Ehle, 1988). Cherokee people with mixed blood, or

part White blood, were often spared the removal. What this meant for the Cherokees was

a divided nation. Cherokees were not only now separated by thousands of miles at a time

when communication was extremely difficult over long distances, but many were forced

to deny their own cultural heritage for survival. The Civil War only exacerbated the

differences between the Cherokees living in the East and the Cherokees forced to move to IT. For example, the lives of the Eastern Cherokees were negatively affected by the war that raged in and around their land. They were often cold, hungry, and living with little prosperity. However, the Western Cherokees prospered due to the need for grain and livestock to supply the War. Both grain and cattle were raised on Indian land (Perdue, 1993). This only widened the growing gap between what was becoming known as the Eastern Band and the Western Band of Cherokees.

In the end, what resulted was a divided people. The Eastern Band of Cherokees remain today predominantly in northern Georgia and eastern North Carolina, in the Smoky Mountain region. An area is designated as reservation land just southwest of Asheville, North Carolina, and is home to several thousand Cherokees, most of whom are full-blood or near full-blood. This band of Cherokees prefer the term "American Indian" to "Native American" and are led by a tribal council and appointed chief. Many of the customs and traditions they follow today have been passed down through the centuries and are similar to colonial days (Woodward, 1963).

The Western Band of Cherokees are located in eastern Oklahoma. They prefer the term "Native American" to "American Indian" and are led by a tribal council and an elected chief. The two councils of the Eastern and Western Bands operate as if they were separate tribes, at least politically. The Western Band Cherokees refer to themselves as the "Cherokee Nation," or more simply, "The Cherokee." Their customs and traditions like the Eastern Band are richly steeped in history, but have diverged from the Eastern band. The language spoken by the Cherokee Nation is in many ways different from the Eastern band language, reflecting the influence of the geographic region, including a

Hispanic influence. Informally, Western Cherokees refer to themselves and their people as "the People" or "Indians" and make references to their traditional values as the "Indian way." Those speaking Cherokee are said to speak "the Language," or "the Indian Language" (Woodward, 1963).

This paper focuses on the people of the Cherokee Nation located in the Oklahoma region, mostly in Adair, Cherokee, Mayes, and Delaware Counties. For the purpose of this paper, when reference is made to a Cherokee person, or the Cherokee, it should be assumed that the writer is speaking of a member of the Cherokee Nation, or of the Western band of Cherokees.

The seat of the Cherokee Nation is located in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The geographic area is a rugged terrain of hills, mountains and rocky plains. Cherokee land is blessed with many beautiful rivers and creeks including the Neosho (or Grand as it is now called), the Arkansas, and the Illinois. The Illinois River runs through the Tahlequah area and has been a source of income, food, and recreation for the Cherokee for generations. Farming in many places in this area is not possible due to the terrain, so the Indian people have relied on ranching cows, horses, turkeys and chickens for meager incomes. Most Cherokees living in these counties live below the poverty line (Woodward, 1963; Ehle,1988). Not only is this attributable to the terrain, but also to the Indian traditional value of living in harmony with nature, and taking only that which is needed for survival. A need for the accumulation of wealth has not been a historical value of the Cherokee Indian (Perdue, 1993).

In describing the Cherokee, Ehle (1988) writes that Cherokees are "hospitable but uneffusive" (p. 2) and often remain aloof. Historically, Cherokees were not likely to look

a person in the eye while talking, instead preferring to look off into the distance, and it remains true today. When speaking, Cherokees speak slowly, and use their hands extensively while speaking. It is courteous and expected that a period of silence be observed between speakers. Ehle (1988) described Cherokees as "copper" in color, though not as dark as the Creek or Choctaw Indian. The Cherokee gained the reputation as early as the late 1700's as being "clean and neat," in body and house, of being polite, and reserved in nature. The Cherokee male was reputed to be "quick to react and easily offended" (Ehle, 1988; p. 2). Cherokee society was matriarchical in nature, and the women had many rights and often were looked upon for advice and wisdom. In most families, the grandmother taught the young the way of the Cherokee and she was viewed upon with the greatest respect. The Cherokees believed that they were responsible for the animals and the land, and cared for it accordingly. They killed no more than their people could eat, and found uses for all parts of the animal so that nothing was wasted. Their legends and their myths reflected this love of Earth and the animals (Ehle, 1988).

> "For, given the proper incentive, no mountain, it seems, is too high to climb,
> no current too swift to swim, if one is a Cherokee." (Woodward, 1963; p. 325.)

Grief and Members of the Cherokee Nation

Many anthropological studies have focused upon the rituals of past indigenous peoples. Ancient societies, it seems, relied heavily upon ritualistic behaviors to assist them in the grieving process. Steele (1977) suggested that by learning about the adaptive ways of the past, we might learn better ways of coping with and experiencing this process than is common in Western society today. For example, he stated that Mayans grieved openly and intensely for several days following a death. Custom held that the dead

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person's spirit remained in the community for several days following the death while it learned, or decided, where to go for eternity. This period also allowed the "spirit" time to separate emotionally from the loved ones left behind. Those left behind held an important role in the spirit's journey. They chanted, sang and performed rituals that helped guide the soul to its resting place. Without them, the soul would not know the direction to take and would become eternally lost. The grieving period, though only a few days, was extremely intense, usually characterized by around the clock sadness, crying, and often wailing. All members of the family participated. After the soul was assumed to have journeyed forward, the family resumed more normal daily operations. Though the person was not forgotten, the death was accepted and the soul was assumed to be in its paradise.

Ancient people also displayed a belief in ghosts, and ghost images as described in an anthropological study designed by Becker & Bruner (1931). The authors concluded that the ancient civilizations used ghosts as evidence of life after death. Though the ghosts often conjured fears of the hereafter, it may have been more accurately a reflection of the living person's death anxiety. The ritual of ghosts, or depiction of ghosts, was a way of communicating the anxiety of the unknown and the feared aspect of death.

Pettle & Britten (1995) explain the importance of rituals when working with children as aids in helping to concretize the death. As children begin to formalize their thought processes (a conceptual theory that will addressed more fully later) and to formulate abstract thought, rituals and symbols may be of invaluable assistance. For example, the funeral ritual may help the child to understand the irreversibility of the

death and the grave marker, or headstone, may be help the child grasp the concept of the cemetery and the grave.

There has been very little research conducted using Native Americans in the area of death, dying, and the grief process. The researcher was unable to find any studies that dealt directly with the issue of death and Cherokee Indians of any age, much less children or adolescents. Existing research has produced models, formulated on members of dominant culture, that do not emphasize story-telling, metaphors, and legends, but rather deal with death confrontationally, and "head-on." This is in contrast to the Native way of the Cherokee.

Traditionally, Cherokee Indians used stories and legends to communicate some of their people's traditions concerning death and dying. The legend of the "Daughter and the Sun" (Duncan, 1998) is an account that was passed down through the generations in many different forms. The story lives on in many variations because for generations it was not written. The legends and the stories of the Cherokee (and legends originating from many other tribes also) were forbidden to be written. These stories were to be passed from generation to generation by word of mouth. The Cherokee believed that this was the only way to keep the stories "alive" and relevant to the listener. The theme, or the moral, of the story remained intact, but each storyteller infused his or her own personality into the tale. The story, therefore, evolved over time (Mooney, 1995; Duncan, 1998). In the story of the Daughter of the Sun, each variation centered around the Sun.

Often, Native American stories personify elements of Nature, such as the Sun, stars, trees, and animals. In this story, the Sun disliked the people of the Earth because

they could not look directly at her, and because they made such ugly faces whenever they tried. So, the Sun plotted to kill the people of the Earth while she visited her daughter's house, which was located in the middle of the sky, directly above the Earth. The Sun's daughter was the Moon.

When the Sun was in her daughter's house, her rays beat heavily down onto the Earth, killing many and scorching the land and the crops. To save themselves, the people of the Earth decided to kill the Sun. Not knowing how to do it themselves, they asked the Snake to go to the Sun and to bite her. The rattlesnake traveled to the daughter's house and waited for the Sun to visit the Moon. But, before she came, he became anxious. When the daughter stepped out of her house to greet her mother, the rattlesnake bit the daughter instead, killing her instantly. The Sun grieved her daughter's death, and did not shine on the Earth, leaving it very dark. This was not good either, so the people of the Earth decided that someone must go to the Ghost Country to retrieve the Sun's daughter so that the Sun would shine again. Several men who had been chosen, took the long journey to the Ghost Country where they found the Moon dancing around the fire with the other ghosts. Using trickery, they enticed the daughter away from the fire, placing her in a box. Along the way home, she pleaded to be given a little more air, so they cracked the lid of the box to help her breathe. At once, they heard a rushing sound and then noticed a redbird in the bushes nearby. When they arrived home and opened the box, it was empty. The Sun's daughter was gone.

The legend is that if they had not opened the box, the dead could be returned to the living, but because of their actions, the dead could no longer be brought back. The Sun's daughter is now the redbird. The Sun was still very sad and disappointed, and she

cried and cried until the Earth was almost flooded. The people of the Earth tried to comfort her, dancing and singing her songs. Eventually, she too began to smile again, and once more the Earth was warm and light (Mooney, 1995).

As typical for many Native American stories, for centuries the stories were never written, only passed down by the spoken word, which likely accounts for the many variations (Mooney, 1995). These stories provide not only an explanation for events that are hard to understand and/or accept (e.g. death). They also depict solutions and a manner for behavior. For example, the Sun was so sad that she cried so many tears the Earth became flooded. But, with the help of the Earth's people she began to feel better and was able to continue her life and give others joy. This implies that grief is natural and acceptable, and that hope exists for continuing to live after such a painful event, especially when the community is able to participate in the grief process by assisting in supportive ways the person in mourning.

Perdue (1993) recalls a time from his childhood when a family friend and her infant son died. He remembers that the child was wrapped in a blanket and placed under the bed in the house where he had lived. Traditionally, when an Indian person died, the community would come together to buy, or obtain, the wood to make a coffin for the deceased. The coffin would be kept within the house of the deceased's family where the family would "sit up with the dead" until the time of the funeral, which might be several days or more.

The mother's body in Perdue's recollection, was placed in a tent on the family grounds and a large fire was built to "smoke her" which is a purification process. The family and friends never left the tent for many days, dancing and singing around it. The

women of the tribe began preparing an elaborate feast that was to be enjoyed on the grave of the mother after she was buried. After several days, the casket was taken to the cemetery and buried along with all the woman's worldly possessions. A blanket was spread over the grave and all the people celebrated by eating the feast. The husband of the mother and the child then bathed, put on a new suit, and "enjoyed the celebration with the others" (p. 113).

The family of the woman endured an extremely intense grieving period followed by her burial and a celebration of her life. The living then symbolically clothed themselves for a new beginning. After the proper mourning and burial ritual of the tribe, the spouse of the deceased person was then free to socialize with the tribe and to marry if he or she chose to do so.

Legends, stories, rituals, and ceremonies were and continue to be a significant part of the Native American experience. Stories, passed from generation to generation, teach, comfort, motivate, inform, and socialize the Native American (Mooney, 1995). Legends provide heroes and role models to look up to, as well as construct social mores for the young Native American to follow. Rituals and ceremonies provide social order, consistency, and comfort. Native Americans from many tribes have viewed death as a natural part of life, a natural end of the life on the Earth, and a beginning for the spiritual life. The rituals and ceremonies perform a valuable service in that they are comforting and consistent, providing the Native American person with a structured, prescribed manner of actions and behaviors during a time when they may feel off-balanced, uncertain, lonely, and/or afraid, to name a few of the emotions that a person may feel after the death of a loved one. In addition, these prescribed actions and behaviors are

socially sanctioned by other members of the group, and are supported and encouraged. This occurs when the person is in great need of feeling supported.

This may be especially true for Cherokee children who have experienced the death of a loved one. The child's world has been irrevocably altered by the death, and he or she may be left feeling confused and worried about the future. The stories provide understandable explanations concerning the death, and may provide comfort concerning the whereabouts of the deceased, the future without the deceased, and the role of self in the family now without the deceased as an active, present member. The rituals and customs provide a structure where order is perceived. This could be comforting to the child who is now looking to the adults in his or her life for direction in terms of how to act, what to say, and how to express how he or she is feeling.

The process of grieving described above has not been examined by researchers to date. It is unique to the Cherokee tribe, in many ways, and unique to existing models of grieving based upon the experiences of dominant culture in the United States in many more ways. The next section reviews models of grief that clinicians and researchers have traditionally used. As one might imagine, the models generally do not adequately depict healthy grieving practices of non-Western peoples, such as those just described.

Models of Grieving

As humans, especially those from Westernized cultures, we often try to ignore the inevitability of death, almost pretending that we and those we love will live forever. LaGrand (1986) found that 28.5% of the 3,510 adults surveyed in his study between the ages of 17 and 24 stated that their "most recent major loss" was that of a loved one. It should be clear then that despite our culturally imposed ideal to "deny" death, it is an

undeniable fact of life, affecting all of us, some from an early age. Unfortunately, death can be a taboo subject in Western society (Kubler-Ross, 1967), one that even professionals such as doctors and mental health workers try to avoid. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969) was one of the first to tackle the topic head on. In her pioneering work, Kubler-Ross developed a model for the stages of grief. They are:

Stage 1:   Denial and Isolation

Stage 2:   Anger expressed to family, life, and God

Stage 3:   Bargaining with God

Stage 4:   Depression

Stage 5:   Acceptance

In Stage 1, the grieving person refuses to accept the grieved event. The person may choose to be alone, not wanting to talk about the event, or perhaps any other subject. Stage 2 begins the anger at how such an event could happen. The person is becoming aware of the reality of the event and begins to search for someone to blame, including family, fate, or even God. The third stage depicts the person telling God, if you will make the illness go away, or if you will bring the dead person back, I will, for example, go to church, be a better person...whatever. Go to church more often, or be a better person, whatever the grieving person feels might be of value to God. The fourth stage begins when the reality of the event is clear, and the bargaining did not work. The grieving person becomes depressed, overcome with sadness concerning the event. Finally, the fifth stage has the person accepting the reality of the event. The person then accepts the death or the impending death of either self, or another.

Though her model is often linearly depicted, and applied, recent interpretations have included a more fluid contextualization (Bugen, 1977). The dying or grieving person can be expected to experience and to re-experience the stages of the model in random and fluctuating fashion. One person may move in and out of the first three stages, but never experience the last two stages, while another person may only experience the first and the last stage (Bugen, 1977). A third person may never experience any stage other than the first. Kubler-Ross posited that "many" people might follow her model's pattern, but she did not intend that each person would follow a linear progression through the stages, nor did she suggest a specified amount of time in each stage. Those interpreting her model, however, have often used a more rigid interpretation of the stages, contending that those not attaining the acceptance stage had somehow experienced a less positive, or healthy, bereavement (Bugen, 1977).

In medical schools and psychology training programs all over the country, it is generally impossible to complete the program without exposure to Kubler-Ross's model. One study indicated that nearly 80% of all medical schools taught the central tenets of Kubler-Ross's theory as the theory in death and dying, with little modification (Retsinas, 1988). Psychology programs may teach alternate theories, but most often they begin by teaching the theory that spawned many others.

In her work with patients dying from cancer, she observed not only their experiences, but also the experiences of the family members, the caregivers, and even the medical staff and personnel. She noted that many believed that if death was not discussed or acknowledged, then it somehow did not exist; or, perhaps, that it would not hurt as badly when someone who was loved, dies. Kubler-Ross (1969) did not believe

that these cultural norms were beneficial to adhere to. She posited that the philosophical thought of Westerners to "get over it" was not useful in resolution of grief in many cases, perhaps even exacerbating grief in others.

Similar to Kubler-Ross's stage theory of grieving, Worden (1991) proposed that an individual must experience four specific tasks of mourning to successfully grieve the death and to continue to grow and develop as an individual. These four tasks are: (a) accept the reality of the loss; (b) experience the pain of grief; (c) adjust the environment to accommodate for the loss of the dead person; and, (d) withdraw emotional energy from the dead and re-invest it into the living. Worden's approach is task-focused, problem-focused, goal-oriented and specific. The grieving person should recognize the loss and modify his or her behavior to reflect the loss (e.g. remove the dead person's clothes from the closet, quit expecting the phone call to be from the dead person), which would cause emotional pain, a necessary part of grieving. This intense, short period of intense pain would prevent the later resurfacing of the trauma of the loss, and the subsequent issues that may bring on. After this intense but short period, the person should begin to get back into his or her "new" life without the dead person. The new life should involve new routines, new familial roles, new friendships and specifically a future-oriented focus where the emotional energy one expends is directed towards other living members of society, rather than a focus on the past or dead loved ones.

Following Kubler-Ross's initial study, and the many stage theories that followed hers, most research conducted in the area focused on adult grieving with little research focusing on children and adolescents (Van Eerdewegh, Bieri, Parrilla, & Clayton,1982). Until the 1970-80's, the research centered around psychoanalytic theory, which proposed

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that children did not grieve in the sense that adults grieve. The prevailing idea was that children were not impacted by their grief because they did not possess the necessary psychological faculties to do so, and this was evident by their lack of symptomology, when compared to adults (Abrahams & Whitlock, 1969; Birtchnell, 1970a;b; Wolfenstein, 1966). As well, authors who suggested that children did grieve, studied children using adult models. Not until the late 1970's and early 1980's were more studies conducted that demonstrated that children grieve in unique ways.

Another model of grief developed around the same time period of the late 1970's, early 1980's, was the Model of Adjustment in Acute Grief (Williams & Polak, 1979). This model proposed a method that was strikingly different from Kubler-Ross's model. Williams and Polak (1979) proposed that the counselor should become a "consultant" or "educator" rather than counselor to the acutely bereaved because although counselors may have things to teach the person or persons in terms of the stages or cycles of grief, they did not have the ability to fully conceptualize all the factors of the environmental stresses of the family nor the individual determinants. Williams & Polak (1979) wrote, "Certainly those approaches that are predominantly person-centered, call for constant emotional release, and conceptualize repression and denial as ineffective or harmful defenses, are doomed to failure and possibly harmful interference." (p. 44) Their model centered on the didactic approach of providing factual details to the "family survivors" concerning the statistics and specifics of the person's death, including making explanations of why the death may have occurred. The goal was to remain unemotional and detached, allowing the family time to grieve as a personal experience. This model depicts the exact methodology and approach that Kubler-Ross was attempting to move

away from in her model, and that according to some theorists, may be the least effective when working with Native Americans (Sue & Sue, 1990)

In the development of a grief model for families, two authors modified a well-known family systems theory model. Lamberti & Detmer (1993) followed the tenets of the Structural family systems model developed by Salvadore Minuchin (1974). For those interested in a more detailed explanation of Minuchin's theory, please refer to the original source (Minuchin, 1974). Lamberti & Detmer (1993) pointed out that much of the existing research focused upon individuals and their own personal reactions, or upon environmental stressors, and basically ignored the family as a system. The contention was that the death created a profound change upon the family system, and examining the individual reactions was only pertinent to the extent that they were reflected within the overall system. The occurrence of a death within the nuclear family permanently changed the role structure and subsystems of the family. Boundaries and roles that existed before, no longer functioned in the same manner. The grief counselor's role is to assist the family functionally restructure the old roles and boundaries to accommodate for the now missing member. Dysfunctionally, the family may attempt to maintain the old roles and boundaries, as if the person remained as an active family member, which the counselor must be prepared to point out, suggesting alternative methods of structuring roles (Lamberti & Detmer,1993). Where the Model of Adjustment for Acute Grief may be an unlikely fit when working with Native Americans, the family systems model may be a closer fit due to the inclusion of the extended family as important to the individual. However, the direct confrontational style of counselor and the counseling sessions, and the directly implied goal of self-individuation may not provide the best service for the

Native American client. A focus on self may not be consistent with the cultural teachings of the Cherokee person (Sue & Sue, 1990).

Another model developed by Nerken (1993) attempts to allow the individual the license to grieve in a most personal way, but may neglect the importance culture, family, and society for the Native American. Focusing entirely upon the "self" when developing his model, Nerken (1993) wrote, "Grief work is self work, of the most profound and intense kind" (p. 1). To support this contention, he described how bereaved persons communicate their pain using almost exclusive references to the self. For example, people talk about "losing their heart," or "the biggest part of me," or of having "my heart ripped out." Bereavement and loss is described in terms of how it has affected the individual, or more accurately, the core self of the individual. A grief model that reflected the intense personal-ness of grieving by allowing the person to experience deeper inner reflections should be viewed more as an "owners manual" for grieving. In other words, the grief experience is about nothing more than what the "self" experiences, including feelings, thoughts, fears, and especially memories. The outward grieving is the reflection of this intense and uniquely personal inner self-process.

The Nerken (1993) model uses many of the concepts of cognitive theory. As the person begins the intense personal reflective experience, he or she may begin to become aware of cognitions and perceptions of how he or she now "fits" in the world (without the deceased loved one). The person will begin to restructure and reframe his or her perceptions, and this is where the grief counselor can be of assistance. Under this model, the counselor assists the bereaved person along the self-reflective journey by making

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observations that challenge the person to perceive an element in a different manner. The goal of the work is to achieve self-growth and resolution through the grief process.

The models previously described each have components within them that a counselor might find useful when working with Native Americans, such as recognition of the importance of the family system, or recognition of an individual's unique experiences impacting grief. But each of the models also demonstrate components that might alienate the Native American client, such as direct confrontation, or emphasis on the separating from the family of origin. Therefore, it is proposed that the grief model that best fits Native American people would include: an ability to absorb individual differences, such as those that arise from being raised in a different culture; the importance of extended family and society; and, an allowance for the unique experiences of the individual.

Grief Model for Native Americans

While many of the grief models described may adequately reflect the processes of members of the dominant culture, they may not accurately represent members of a minority culture. Native American cultures may predicate the individual's tendency to view themselves more collectivistically (Sue & Sue, 1990) rather than individually. The intense focus upon the "self," as suggested in Nerken's (1993) model for example, may be extremely uncomfortable and inappropriate. Though the structural approach focuses upon the family system, it may still be less effective or appropriate for Native American families because of the confrontational and self-assertive personal style that this model values.

A more valid model of grieving for Native Americans might include a holistic view of the individual, the deceased, the family, and the environment while it retains

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flexibility in the areas of individual reflection and expression. The Social Development Model (SDM) articulated by Shapiro (1996) approaches the topic from an integrated approach, incorporating the individual and the social context of the person's existence. She uses a developmental approach that recognizes the difference in experience and age as these affect behavior.

Much of Shapiro's (1996) research focused upon anthropological studies that sought to provide insight into the beginnings, or basis, of various cultural belief systems. She contends that the grief experience exists only within the frame of the social context of the individual and of level of development in terms of age and experience. SDM suggests that each person, while recognized individually, is viewed as part of a larger system that he or she must interact within and upon which in turn interacts upon and influences the person as well.

SDM is especially well suited for working with people of various cultures, including Native Americans. Instead of prescribing a method of grieving promoting resolution of grief, it describes methods of grieving promoting resolution of grief. For many years following the development of Kubler-Ross's model, persons who did not experience "catharsis" or an intense emotional release relatively soon after the death, were strongly encouraged to "let go" of the dead person. In essence, they were encouraged to *confront* death, with the goal being to "get over it." If the person was informed by the teachings of his or her culture to do otherwise, or simply if the person did not "feel" like it, then the grieving process was labeled pathological.

The Social Developmental Model demonstrates that while a catharsis and then moving on with normal daily life may be an extremely effective method for some, for

others it may extremely harmful. Instead, the counselor using SDM would allow the direction of the grief path to be carved by the grieving person, and/or family, and by the cultural norms, traditions, and rituals of the culture to which the person belongs. SDM therefore requires some knowledge of cultural customs/norms by the counselor, though mainly it requires the basic counseling skills of understanding and active listening. The counselor incorporates not only the cultural identity of the grieving individual, but many other factors as well. Some of these factors include: socioeconomic status, educational level, immigration status, family history, and others. The counselor should also be aware of developmental stages and processes, and their impact upon the person or persons grieving.

Shapiro (1996) suggests that the researcher respect the individual, or the family, as the "expert" or "best authority" on his or her own cultural assessment and coping skills, and act more as a facilitator than a teacher when working with the grief process. The didactic approach of other models set up a power dynamic leading to undesirable consequences, such as the client fearing that he or she is not being understood by the counselor, or is not being "heard." The client may then experience any of a wide variety of feelings and emotions such as disillusionment, anger, guilt, fear, hopelessness, etc. As a result, the client may endure the counseling quietly, or may decide to discontinue counseling.

Shapiro emphasizes the need to be open about the cultural aspects of grieving, including the power differences and other realistic stressors that may be exacerbating the process. For example, the counselor should first openly acknowledge the differences in the Native American traditions of grieving with the dominant culture traditions, and then

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follow up by acknowledging the difficulties, but importance, of maintaining those Native

traditions while living within the dominant culture. The therapist should above all else

convey his or her own openness to these cultural differences and his or her support of the

client in preserving them. This can be done in part by the therapist assisting in two

important tasks: "resource building" in the family structure; and, assistance in

"collaborative meaning making." These counselor tasks are accomplished by listening

and interacting with the family, observing family interactions, asking questions and

being open to the answers, and finally by assisting the family meet its own needs based

upon the individual experiences of the family. Shapiro states that these counselor tasks

are imperative to the process of working with families from diverse cultural backgrounds.

She also places strong emphasis on the counselor's awareness of his or her own cultural

background and belief systems. When working with others whose values or beliefs are

vastly different, a counselor may be inclined to allow his or her own beliefs to unduly

influence the direction of the work. Though a counselor's own cultural background

cannot, and should not, be completely eliminated, it is vital that it be acknowledged and

processed as part of the work. She cautions that we as counselors must closely scrutinize

our verbiage in terms of "good grief" and "bad grief," being careful not to pathologize

that which we are not aware of, or do not understand, when viewing through one's own

cultural lens.

Shapiro (1996) rejects the long held Kubler-Ross inspired belief that grief is a

stage process, and anything less or more is pathological. Rather than processing through

stages, Shapiro contends that the family must be able to construct a balance between

family/cultural traditions (providing intergenerational continuity) and an individual grief

process (providing a personal expression of feelings). This balance of culture and individual does not value one above the other; rather, it recognizes that both must co-exist in a manner acceptable to the individual and the family. This balance also suggests (unlike the linear rigidity of the stage models that suggest that a person "progresses" through grief in steps) that the experience of the person is a fluid movement of development that is individual to each person, even within a family, or a larger system. Though the family members may have similar experiences, the process is different for each one.

Bereavement and Depression – Empirical Studies Among Children

The death of a parent is particularly traumatic for children. The "world" in which the child has lived, may appear to "fall apart" in the eyes of the child. Using a psychodynamic theoretical perspective, Camper (1983) examined how children struggle to maintain their "inner-world," following the death of a parent. The author observes from his research that "denial" of the reality of the event is the most common occurrence. This denial is identified by the survivor recalling events when the parent re-appeared after the death or some other "fantasy" involving the deceased person. The author also reports that children often entertain ideations of reunion with the deceased parent, increasing their "denial" and slowing their grieving resolution process. This denial is the child's attempt to cope with "intolerable anxiety" that otherwise could not be handled. Denial also may lead to the inability to feel "sadness" on the part of the child. The author suggests that children may not experience the intense feelings of sadness that adults feel following the loss of a loved one because they are not psychologically or physiologically prepared or able to do so. Finally, the author observes that the dead parent may be

"idealized" while the surviving parent will be the recipient of displaced hostile feelings stemming from anger about the loss. Thus, the denial cycle leads to "arrested development" and adult pathology.

In contrast to Camper's (1983) study, Van Eerdewegh, et al. (1982) conducted a 13 month study examining children who lost a parent due to death. The researchers interviewed the children one month after the death, and again, at 13 months after the death. The authors reported no correlation between grieving and the development of psychopathology, including depression. Their results revealed no higher occurrence of depression in the children than was found in the control group. Indeed, their study, also conducted from a psychodynamic theoretical standpoint found that children experience grief in a different manner than adults, and in a way that should not be considered "grieving." Van Eerdewegh, et al. (1982) report that a child's reaction to any death, including parental death, is most often "mild" and the symptoms of this reaction are not profound and/or long-lasting.

Birtchnell (1970a; b; c) conducted several studies with children and adolescents examining the existence of depression in children following the death of a parent. The researcher administered his own questionnaire that attempted to tap into the constructs of developmental retardation and mental illness. Birtchnell concluded that there was no higher incidence of depression in bereaved children and adolescents than with other children from the same population. Birtchnell used subjects from a psychiatric unit of a mental hospital for children and did not compare his results to a population of children not admitted to a psychiatric hospital, thus making the results less generalizable.

In another study that same year, Birtchnell (1970d) looked at the relationship between early parental death, depression and suicide. He found that of those admitted to the psychiatric hospital who had attempted suicide and were severely depressed, a significant number had experienced an early parental death. The author concluded that the relationship existed due more to "parental absence" more than parental death.

More recent studies have shown that children do indeed grieve, though perhaps not in the same manner as adults. Children may display their symptomology in different ways than adults, and may experience and express different manifestations of those symptoms. In fact, many recent studies have shown that parental death during childhood may have "an enduring traumatic effect" on the individual which manifests in the form of depression for many children (Adams-Greenly & Moynihan, 1982).

A study by Handford, Mattison, Humphrey, & McLaughlin (1986) studied depression in children at a boarding school. The children had each experienced a loss of a parent that included death, divorce, or some other form of separation. They found that 31% of the children who had recently experienced the loss of a parent were symptomatic of depression. This finding represented a significant difference from the incidence rate in depression in children who had not experienced a loss. The finding suggests that children who are separated from a parent for any of a variety of reasons, including death, may be prone to depressive symptomology.

Gray (1987) studied adolescents with ages ranging from 12 to 19 years old who had recently lost a parent due to death not less than six months prior and not more than five years prior. Gray included as variables constructs such as personality type, social support systems, nature of relationship with the deceased, suddenness of death, religious

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beliefs, and SES. He examined 50 adolescents by administering a short informal interview designed to gather details. He also administered the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) as a measure of adaptation. The most significant finding of the study was that those adolescents who perceived they had high levels of informal support (from the surviving parent, other family members, and friends) scored significantly lower on the BDI, suggesting higher levels of adjustment to the death. The inverse relationship was also noted; low social support predicted higher depression scores. Another finding was that there was no relationship between time elapsed since death and outcome. Therefore, it might be suggested that an adolescent's grieving for the loss of a parent may be a process that occurs over a longer length of time, in this case in excess of five years.

Children and Loss

As previous studies described, children who experience the death of a parent, according to past research, may be at greater risk for psychological symptomology such as depression, anxiety, and somatic symptoms. They also may experience behavioral disturbances such as restlessness, hyperactivity, loss of concentration, social withdrawal, social anxiety, increased relationship difficulties, and changes in appetite and sleep (Worden & Silverman, 1996). Children also may present shock and disbelief at the loss, they may engage in actively denying the reality of the event, leading to confusion, frustration, and a sense of numbness. They may experience intense feelings of loneliness, loss, abandonment, anger, rage, powerlessness, helplessness and hopelessness. As well, children may display a wide array of somatic symptoms and minor illnesses attributable to the grieving process (Pettle & Britten, 1995).

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This predilection for serious problems resulting from the experience of the death may not be evident until two years or more following the death. Worden & Silverman (1996) focused their study on the effect of the death immediately after the event, with follow-ups at one and two years. Using self-report and parent report measures such as the Auchenbach Child Behavior Check List (CBCL), they found no significant differences in behaviors measuring such concepts as self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-control immediately following the event. However, at one year, a significant difference existed between bereaved children and non-bereaved children in these areas. At two years, the significant difference had increased indicating that symptoms had increased for some, and begun to manifest for others. The authors point out that current standards for bereavement care may not be adequate for effective child bereavement counseling. For example, most hospice care programs offer services to families (including children) for one year following the death of the loved one. However, according to the results of this study, this may be the point at which symptoms are just beginning to emerge, not diminishing. Childhood grief counseling may require a longer time investment than is currently generally employed.

Palombo (1981) discussed several important areas of childhood mourning. They include: loss of a parent as a love object; the death viewed as a narcissistic injury; the impact on the cognitive development of the child; and, the death of the parent as a trauma.

First, developmentally, the child views the parent as his or her "first love." Using the developmental construct of object constancy, Palombo (1981) hypothesizes that the child is unprepared for the psychological task of mourning until this stage has been

reached. Simply, if the child is unable cognitively to grasp the concept of permanence and loss, he or she will be unable to understand the finality of death. This is quite similar to the earlier discussion of whether the child is capable of mourning (grieving), and whether adult models adequately explain a child's loss, or if children grieve differently. It is Palombo's contention that children are only able to actively participate in their own mourning process after achieving object constancy, usually around the age of 36 months.

Second, the death of the parent may represent a narcissistic injury for the child. Heavily based in psychoanalytic thought, Palombo (1981) asserts that as the child struggles to attain a sense of self, or separateness, from his caregiver(s), he does so by incorporating the caregiver as extensions, or models, of the self he is striving to become. The loss to death within this model may represent a loss of self, an interruption in the developmental task of attaining autonomy, or sense of self. The child may view the death as an insult to self, as most children perceive the world largely from a self-centered, or self-focused, lens. The child may feel disillusioned, abandoned, and rageful.

Third, Palombo (1981) addresses the cognitive ability of the child at the time of the death. The child is "confronted with an integrative and adaptive task to a reality event," to which he may not have the psychological and cognitive resources to adequately respond. Palombo based his model on the work of several other theorists, with greatest focus on Piaget (1973). He hypothesizes that children are unable to adequately grasp the cognitive detail of death until the stage of concrete operations has been satisfied. Though the child may have rudimentary knowledge of words such as "death" and "killed" it appears that they cannot *fully* grasp the meaning until the age of 8-11 years old (Palombo, 1981; Pettle & Britten, 1995). Before this time, there may exist some fantastical

thinking on the part of the child, for example, that her mother is dead, but will come home later, or that his father is living in the dog now (Wolfenstein, 1966).

Finally, Palombo (1981) examined the concept of death as a trauma in the child's life. Palombo stated that past research on adults who have lost a parent in childhood experience "developmental ego arrest" leading to adult psychopathology, if the death remains "unmourned." Palombo theorizes this possibility because the single event (the death) is so traumatic to the child that it represents a lifelong struggle to overcome. The death itself overwhelms the ego at a critical stage of development (childhood) and the child cannot defend itself due to lack of psychological, cognitive and emotional resources available to him. Palombo's theory is supported by Bowlby (1970) who writes that "affectional bonding," or the "attraction that one individual has for another individual," can be exceptionally strong. Breaking that bond for any reason is not done without considerable distress. Bowlby asserts that affectional bonding is observed in all species, and thus is a natural state of living. The breaking of such a bond is therefore not only painful, but unnatural, and will likely lead to assorted mental disruptions or illnesses such as psychopathology, suicidal tendencies, and depression. Bowlby suggests that this may be especially noticeable in adults who suffered the broken bond of the parent-child.

To facilitate the circumvention of adult onset illness resulting from the childhood trauma, or loss, Palombo (1981) states that the child must be assisted in the process of mourning by supportive family and grief counselors over a longer period of time than might be necessary for adult who have suffered a loss to death. The impact of the death may have more profound consequences on the child due to his or her developmental and maturational stage.

Though there is an apparent disagreement in the literature concerning the issue of exactly when a child is capable of mourning, Camper (1983) points out several observable reactions a child demonstrates during mourning. First, Camper writes that children most often exhibit signs of denial of the event. Fantasies that the parent will return in some way or form are often present as well. Second, she points out children, as a result of this profound denial, may demonstrate inappropriate mood and/or affect. They may be exuberant, or giddy, planning the reunion, and may fail to demonstrate sadness. She asserts this may be a form of ego defense, protecting the child from that which is too painful to bear. Third, and finally, the child may begin to "idealize" the dead parent. Camper states that this may be done to accomplish maintaining a tie to the dead parent and to combat the narcissistic injury resulting from the loss. As Palombo (1981) suggested, the child may feel very angry at the parent for leaving him or her at such a critical time. This anger, or ambivalence, may be unacceptable to the child, who then idealizes the parent to neutralize these negative feelings.

Though much of her theory is psychoanalytically based, Camper (1983) diverges from this approach in one critical aspect of mourning – decathexis. Decathexis, psychoanalytically, is the process of "ridding" oneself of the internal representations of the dead person by emotionally catharting and otherwise working through the painful process of grief. Camper states that the child may need to hold on to the representation of the dead person due to the importance and magnitude of the previous relationship. She writes that for successful mourning, the child must be able to "alter" the representation (not remove, or decathexis) as is developmentally required along the path of maturation.

Only the child who is unable to alter, or amend this representation, seems to be at risk for unsuccessful continued developmental growth.

This approach may be especially useful for understanding and conceptualizing work with Native American persons whose culture may inform them to continue "relationships" with the dead person in the form of visions or dreams. The Native American child may be capable of beginning to conceptualize the dead parent in an altered state (dream/vision) rather than doggedly holding on to the image of the parent as alive and physically available. Rather than a form of pathology, this could be viewed as an alternative way to incorporate the dead parent into the continued maturational process (Zambelli, Clark, Hodgson, 1994).

Culture: Society, Family, and Religious/Spiritual Rituals in Grieving

Social support is an important variable when predicting the outcome of grief. Children with high levels of perceived social support experience healthier, less severe bereavement symptoms (Floerchinger,1991). Grief responses that have been identified as "unhealthy" or "complicated" are exacerbated by a lack of support. Lack of support includes a perceived misunderstanding of the grieving response and the individual experience. Persons of any age who are experiencing grief, or intense painful emotion, have a strong social need to be understood and accepted based upon their own experience (Oltjenbruns, 1998). They need to be able to express and experience those intense notions in a manner that feels "right" to them, without judgment from outsiders. These findings are particularly germane to the minority culture person who may be unable to find social support from majority culture individuals who misinterpret or misunderstand the unique grieving process.

Perhaps the most salient way of making social connection with others is by using words, or language, to communicate not only experiences, but also the feelings and often strong emotions that accompany those experiences. In a study that examined the role of language, or communication, and a grief experience, Pennebaker, Mayne, & Francis (1997) interviewed men who had lost a partner to the AIDS epidemic. Using language variables as predictors of a "healthy" grief response, they found that those persons able to articulate their grief, especially their emotional experience, were more likely to self-report an "adaptive bereavement." This healthy grief response, or adaptive bereavement, was defined for the study as a time period of grieving (sadness, loneliness, depression) followed by acceptance of the death and an ability to continue life within a few months time.

The language variables also seemed to indicate that the grieving person was insightful and able to cognitively process the reality of the situation. It was presumed by the authors that participants who were able to communicate their "story" either by language (spoken or written) somehow used the process to "work out" a meaning for the death in a personally acceptable way. This communication provided not only a link to others, but also a link to the self, and to the deceased. The authors note that one especially interesting finding was that the participants showed no apparent need to "cathart," or to express negative emotions, in order to report an adaptive experience. Those that were able to use verbal language to positively express emotions were more likely to self-report an adaptive experience, and were less likely to report ruminations over the death one year later than those who were unable to verbally express positive emotions, or those who verbally expressed negative emotions (Pennebaker, et al., 1977).

This finding supports many authors' contentions that there are numerous alternative ways to experience grief that should be considered adaptive or healthy coping methods in addition to catharsis, or experiencing negative emotions and pain outwardly.

One such way that coping has surfaced is the belief in spirituality and the hope that the deceased person in spirit survives. This spirituality may or may not be connected to organized religion, or religious belief. Sormanti & August (1997) examined the role of spirituality in the coping mechanisms of parents following the death of a child. They note that parental bereaving has been shown in the literature to be a lifelong process that may be most intense for the first several years following the death. The authors note that this process may put grieving parents in opposition to common Western thought that one should "get over it" and/or "get on with their lives" following a significant person's death. Parents, then, who are unable to do so, find themselves at odds with the dominant culture in which they live. They may feel ignored, isolated, and intensely alone. They may feel shame and/or guilt for the grief that they feel. Sormanti & August (1997) propose that one method of coping is to establish a spiritual connection with the deceased child. The parents may experience this connection in a variety of ways, such as in visions, by talking to the child, by imagining the child in heaven, or by simply feeling the child's presence. This connection, according to the authors provides the parent comfort and may assist the parent in managing his or her grief.

Stroebe, Gergen, Gergen, and Stroebe (1992) suggest that when parents (or any person grieving a death) fail to follow the dominating Western philosophy of "breaking bonds" with the deceased person, they are in danger of being pathologized by medical and mental health personnel. If the grieving person chooses to maintain spiritual ties

with the deceased as described by Sormanti & August (1997), it may be perceived as "abnormal" or counter to the parents' healthy post-death adjustment.

Individuals identifying with the practices and values of a diverse culture within Western society may find themselves in the precarious position of trying to adjust to dominant culture thinking, while maintaining their own cultural beliefs. Maintaining their own cultural beliefs may place them at the risk of being "pathologized" by the dominant culture. Pathologizing the grief responses of a person compounds the already difficult process of bereavement. It is possible the person may question the practices of his or her culture and of self, as well as possibly being deprived of necessary social supports from members of the dominant culture. These social supports include everything from appropriate mental health services to peer support (Stroebe et.al., 1992).

Shapiro (1996) points out that the grieving process is so vitally important, so integral, to the functioning of a society and individuals, that anthropologists often study the bereavement rituals of ancient civilizations to better understand them as a whole. By learning about the ways in which the ancient peoples grieved, we glean insight into the ways in which they lived. The current dominant culture grieving ritual includes four basic assumptions: (a) grief is an individual experience that is private; (b) one must openly express grief in order to get over grief; (c) that grief has a "specified endpoint"; and, (d) that the ongoing relationship with the dead individual is over. Shapiro states that if one's grieving falls outside this prescribed set of rules, it is often pathologized. This occurs without consideration for the cultural beliefs of the surviving individual(s). For this reason, it might be expected that culturally diverse persons experiencing grief will be less likely to seek mental health services. Shapiro states that the current system has been

designed to "meet the needs and expectations of White, educated, middle-class families" and that it lacks "culturally sensitive providers."

Shapiro (1996) notes that there are four common concerns of grief across most cultures:

1. Relationship among the dead and the living

2. Describing the nature of life after death

3. Managing the intense emotions of sorrow, terror, rage

4. Social reconstruction of ruptured social roles

She states that cultural values or norms, regardless of the dominant cultural norms, are deeply embedded into a family's grieving process and will regulate how the family as a system deals with the loss of a member. Shapiro (1996) further points out that the grieving process for the children in the family is highly contingent upon the "rules" of the family set by tradition and/or the older members of the family. Loss of a parent means not only the loss of a loved one, but also the loss of a provider. Not only will the child have to learn to deal with the emotional loss of the parent, but with the probable loss of "a way of life." For example, when a father dies leaving his wife and children in American culture, even if the mother works, she will likely earn less than her husband had earned. The children will no longer live the same lifestyle they had before the death of the father.

In a recent study, Oltjenbruns (1998) examined the role of ethnicity in grief when she compared Mexican-American college students to Anglo-American college students in their grieving styles using the Grief Experience Inventory (GEI; Sanders, Mauger, & Strong, 1985). The GEI is used to measure several of the many different ways that grief

manifests, or is exhibited, in individuals who have suffered a loss. The twelve scale inventory includes 3 validity scales (Denial, Atypical Responses, and Social Desirability) and 9 clinical scales (Despair, Anger, Guilt, Social Isolation, Loss of Control, Rumination, Depersonalization, Somatization, and Death Anxiety).

Results of the MANOVA comparing the group scores from the inventory for both the Anglo-American and the Mexican-American students indicated that a significant difference existed between Mexican-American students and Anglo-American students in the areas of "Loss of Control" and "Somatization." Mexican-American students showed significantly higher scores in each of these categories, meaning they demonstrated significantly more of the behaviors and/or thoughts that may indicate the presence of feelings of "loss of control" or somatic symptomology. Oltjenbruns suggested that this may indicate a more intense grieving experience for the Mexican-American student than for the Anglo-American student. Oltjenbruns also notes that the tendency in the literature to date has been to covertly suggest that there is a "right and a wrong" way to grieve, and she urged that care should be taken not to interpret differences in a quantitative or hierarchical manner implying "better" or "best." The author contends that treatment implications may be the most important aspect in relation to cultural differences in grieving and that treatment programs should be aimed at helping the diverse culture members "cope." Oltjenbruns posits that the effective grief counselor will make him or herself aware of the different grieving styles with respect to cultural differences, and will do so without the covertly hidden judgments of "right and wrong" grieving.

It is interesting that we as members of American culture might presume to judge "right and wrong" grieving, according to Romanoff & Terenzio (1998), because the

United States may be one of the few large cultures that do not appear to have "nationally prescribed mourning rituals." In fact, many times people are uncomfortably unsure as to how to act, what to say, or what to do when dealing with members of the deceased's family or while attending funeral services. This uncomfortable-ness may lead to even greater de-ritualizing of the mourning process. Romanoff & Terenzio write that the few remaining rituals to which we ascribe have the apparent role of "transitioning" the surviving members into their new roles, without the deceased, rather than for mourning or grieving the dead.

Rituals, though no longer widely used, perform several critical functions in the grief process including becoming a "vehicle for the expression and containment of strong emotions; their repetitive and prescribed nature eases feelings of anxiety and impotence" (Romanoff & Terenzio, 1998, p. 698). Romanoff & Terenzio note that rituals are able to provide a sense of order in an intense emotional time, often characterized by chaos. Rituals have two important functions: deal with the experience of the mourner; and, include all phases of the bereavement process. Traditionally, Euro-Americans conduct a funeral service several days after the death, but there is generally little that is ritual in between the death and after the funeral.

According to Romanoff & Terenzio (1998), bereavement resolutions involves three elements:

1. Moderation or transformation of the person's sense of self (intrapsychic)

2. Mediation of the new social status of the bereaved

3. Continued communal connection with the deceased

They contend that all three elements must be satisfied for the successful resolution of grief (though not necessarily within a time frame) and that rituals uniquely facilitate all three by providing a commonality of experience for members of a culture and by assisting in eliminating the feeling of impotence, or not knowing what to do or say and thus avoiding the situation entirely.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the meaning of traditional values and

expectations to the Native American person who lost a parent to death in childhood.

Because in the past quantitative research may have inaccurately reflected the experiences

of diverse cultures, including Native American Indians (Dauphinais & King, 1992;

O'Nell, 1989) a qualitative case study approach was utilized. This approach allowed the

researcher to explore the recollections and personal stories of the interviewees.

McCracken (1988) posits that qualitative research is the preferred method when studying

traditional values and customs of Native Americans. The information provided in this

case study format may be "richer" due to open-ended approach to gathering data.

Research Design

Setting

The participants in the study were all members of the Cherokee Nation. The

interviews were conducted in various settings, comfortable to the participant. Six of the

ten participants were interviewed in a quiet, confidential area within the complex of the

headquarters of the Cherokee Nation in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The 4 other interviews, at

the request of the participant, were conducted at the home of the participant. The

information garnered from the interviews is reflective of the cases studied. The

information is not intended to be reflective of members of any of the other Native

American tribes. Though due to hostile political factors and other reasons, the number of

tribes has dwindled over the last two hundred years, several hundred still exist across

America. Each is unique in their cultural traditions, values, beliefs, politically thinking,

and geographic location (Herring, 1990; Garrett & Garrett, 1994). It would be impossible to simplify the cultural traditions of such a diverse population of people into one study.

The settings were chosen in an attempt to provide the interviewee as comfortable a place as possible to participate in the interview. Each setting provided the opportunity for the interviewer and interviewee to meet face-to-face, in a quiet, uninterrupted place, deepening the richness of the data. Observations of non-verbal behaviors were obtained from the interview, and used in the analysis of the final interpretation of the data.

Participants

The participants were all members of the Cherokee Nation. The initial interviewees were identified by governing members of the Cherokee tribal board who provided their names to the researcher. The first contact with these individuals by the researcher was made on the tribal complex or by telephone. The initial meeting consisted of an informal screen to determine if the person was a good fit for the study, i.e. whether they met the age criteria at the time of the death of their parent. Several potential participants were determined not to be appropriate for the study at this time (e.g., they did not fall within the age requirement at the time of death; they did not live with the parent in their memory). Three participants were selected from this original group of possible names. The participants that did not qualify for the study, however, did supply other names of individuals that might better fit the study, and 4 of the participants were located by this manner. Two other participants were located from family member referrals. One participant was located by a chance meeting in a local store in the Tahlequah area.

Of the 10 participants who were interviewed, all initially declined, or expressed concern about being a part of the study. One participant spent several hours talking with

the researcher on 3 different occasions before she agreed to be interviewed on tape. She expressed great concern that the tapes would be sold for profit, or otherwise used to exploit the Cherokees. A promise was made to the participant that the tapes, or the content of the transcribed tapes would not be the basis for a book, or otherwise used for personal profit. At this point, the participant agreed to be interviewed.

Each of the participants experienced the loss of a parent while between the ages of 6 years to eighteen years old (see Table 1 for a demographic description of each participant). Each participant, at the time of the interview, was adult age, at least twenty-one years or older, with no maximum age limit. Inclusion of adults, rather than children, occurred for several reasons including the availability of participants and research findings indicating that some effects of grief may take a number of years to show (Palombo, 1981). In addition to convenience considerations, the inclusion of adults was hoped to access a more complete and detailed personal experience of the impact of the death of a parent over the lifespan of the participant. Also, it was hoped that it would provide a picture of how this early experience of the death of a loved one impacted the adult lifestyle of the now grown child.

No selection criterion was utilized based upon gender of either the participant or the parent who died. Selection criteria did include the stipulation that each of the participants lived with the parent at some point during his or her childhood prior to the parent's death, and that the participant was able to recall specific memories of the time he or she spent with the parent.

Another inclusion criteria was that the participants self-identified as traditional in the Cherokee way. The process of determining level of traditionality was informal,

TABLE 1

DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

PARTICIPANT*	Jim	Mary	Jane	Jill	Jack	Paul	Bill	Todd	Joe	Jake
Gender	Ma	Fe	Fe	Fe	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma
Age	45	68	62	56	24	24	57	34	56	35
Marital Status	M	W	M	D	M	D	M	M	M	M
# of Children	2	1	2	2	1	1	6	1	3	1
Education	12+	10+	12+	12+	12+	12	12+	12	12	12+
Boarding School	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Speak Cherokee	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Age at Death of Parent	17	7	12	7	15	14	8	18	15	13
Gender of deceased parent	Fa	Mo	Fa	Fa	Fa	Fa	Fa	Fa	Fa	Mo
Living w/ Deceased Parent	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Attend Tribal Events	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y

LEGEND

Ma = Male, Fe = Female

M=Married, W=Widowed, D=Divorced

12+ = College hours, 10+ = GED plus college hours, 12 = Completed High School

* Names have been changed

relying on the self-report of the individual, and the subjective judgment of the researcher in some cases. Some areas that were used to signify traditionality were practice or awareness of traditional religion, language, cooking, customs, dancing, and/or a general sense of Cherokee tribal history as passed down from elders or family members. Blood quantum as defined by the United States government was not asked, and was not a criterion for inclusion or exclusion in the study. In the days of the Trail of Tears when the Cherokee people were relocated to Oklahoma territory from their Native lands, acceptance of the Indian way of life was the sole criteria for acceptance by the tribe, regardless of racial heritage. For example, a White person who lived among the people, ate with the people, and adhered to tribal customs would have been considered an Indian brother. To insinuate that this person was not "Indian" would have been a great insult to both the person and the tribe. The researcher, therefore, relied solely upon the self-acknowledgement of the person concerning "Indian-ness" in honor of the traditional way. (Woodward, 1963).

The governing board of the Cherokee Nation was invited to be involved in the selection of the participants, but no formal procedures were in place for such a process. The researcher met at length with the Deputy Chief of the Cherokees, who provided advice and names to be contacted. He and the board were aware that the study and the interviews were being conducted on the grounds. Participants were ensured of their confidentiality prior to the interviews. Before beginning the process, each participant received an explanation that all information and audio-tapes of the session were to be held in strict confidence. The participants were identified by an assigned number. All identifying information was omitted from the transcriptions of the audio tapings. All tape

recordings of the sessions were destroyed upon completion of the transcriptions. All transcripts, though containing no personally identifying information, remained in the custody of the researcher.

Each participant voluntarily participated in the study, and was not compensated in any form for his or her participation. He or she was asked to sign a written consent form that briefly outlined the purpose of the study and the individual rights of the participant, including the right to not participate or to stop the interview process at any time (Appendix A). The consent form was read aloud as part of the audio transcript and verbal permission to participate was obtained. Names of the interviewee were not used during the audio taped portion of the interview, nor were they included in the transcription of the interview. All attempts to protect the identity of the interviewees were made. Participants are identified by pseudonyms in this paper, completely different than their first or last names.

Investigator

The researcher conducting this study is a member of the Cherokee Nation. She was raised near the Cherokee Nation capital of Tahlequah, Oklahoma and many of her paternal relatives remain on Cherokee land. She was reared in a predominantly Euro-American, dominant culture setting, but was exposed to traditional values throughout her life.

Procedure

The interviews were conducted and analyzed using McCracken's (1988) long interview process techniques. The interviewer used a pre-written set of 10 basic questions designed to garner information concerning the participants' perceptions of the

bereavement process following the loss of a parent. However, the questions served as an outline, and no restrictions on the style or content of the participants' answers was enforced. The interview was semi-structured, but aimed to accomplish a fluid interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The study employed a continuous design, meaning that as new information became available from the interviews, the researcher could choose to incorporate that information in the same interview or in subsequent interviews of other participants (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The flexible, continuous, long interview qualitative design was appropriate for the chosen area of study for several reasons (Rubin & Rubin,1995). First, and probably most importantly, the topic (personal grief experience recalled from memory) would most likely be best understood by others using "rich narratives" that allowed the participant adequate license and time to provide details and personal stories to make points when conveying answers.

Also, the "unraveling of complicated relationships" was necessary when trying to understand how a young Native American child felt when he/she suddenly lost his/her parent and how he/she interacted with other family members, friends, and society at large in the aftermath. This is not a question that could have easily been defined by a "Yes" or "No" answer or by a Likert scale.

Finally, the questions under study required a "depth of understanding" to fully appreciate the grief experience from the perspective of a minority culture individual (in this case Cherokee Indian) in terms of the phenomenological context, the social context, and the historical context.

As one researcher noted, absent from the existing literature is the "voice" of the bereaved (Bower, 1997). Bower points out that the "voice" that is heard discussing, explaining, and interpreting both the loss to death of a loved one and the ensuing mourning process is that of the researcher, not the participants. She asserts that the literature, while a reflection of the current or subscribed to theory of the researcher, may not be a reflection of the feelings, attitudes, beliefs and experiences of the participants. Bower designed her study in an attempt to allow the participants to be heard, rather than to provide a forum for her own theoretical views. She utilized a semi-structured ethnographic interview technique using open-ended questions designed to elicit ideographic responses of the grief experience. She analyzed the data by searching the responses for thematic content within the individual responses. Bower's observation was considered when analyzing and reporting the thematic content of the present research. When possible, the researcher used the participants' own words to demonstrate a thematic content point.

A culturally aware model of qualitative interviewing allows the information imparted by the interviewees to define the themes, rather than fitting the information into preconceived categories designed by the researcher. While the researcher was keenly aware of her own cultural heritage, and her inability to remain completely neutral in the interview, it was her desire to allow the voice of the participant to be heard the strongest (Bower, 1997).

McCracken (1988) defines the long interview in four steps including:

1. Literature review in analytical categories
2. Literature review in cultural categories

3. Interview procedure and the discovery of cultural categories

4. Interview analysis and the discovery of analytical categories

The review process of steps 1 and 2 involves gathering literature from the general area of grief and bereavement and from the cultural area of Native American culture, especially as it is applicable to grief. The research should include not only psychological and sociological studies in both areas, but historical and anthropological accounts as well. Although the purpose of the interview questions was not to gather information from the responses that "fit" into pre-designed categories, a deep working knowledge of the histories and theoretical perspectives of the study's variables wa necessary to facilitate a quality interview (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1994).

The target length of the interview was one hour, but one interview lasted only 25 minutes, while another interview lasted 3 1/2 hours. The other 8 interviews lasted on the average of 1 hour and 15 minutes. The length of the interview depended largely upon the breadth of the interviewees' responses. No time restrictions were enforced. Some demographic information was solicited to gain a broader understanding of the historical context of the traditional ways of the Cherokee participant.

The interview was conceptualized and designed following the seven stages of interview investigation as defined by Kvale (1996). The stages are described as follows:

1. Thematizing – This first step involves the formulation of the investigation and a description of the concepts to be discussed. One caution is that the "why" and the "what" of the study should be clarified before the "how". In other words, there should be a firm theoretical and logical base for the question.

2. Designing – During this stage, the researcher should incorporate elements of all seven stages into the design process. What is the desired knowledge and is there the possibility of learning useful knowledge while doing little harm? The design should be based upon the theoretical base acquired in Stage 2.

3. Interviewing – Should be conducted using pre-designed questions as a "guide." These questions are derived from the theoretical knowledge and design plan.

4. Transcribing – This is the important stage of translating the data from the spoken word to written text. This is the preparation stage for the analysis.

5. Analyzing – During this stage, the researcher should select the most appropriate method for analyzing the material based upon the information acquired in the interviews. This should be done with ultimate consideration given to the intended purpose of the study and the theory base.

6. Verifying – Attention should be given throughout each phase of the process to the validity of the study. Are we measuring what we purport to measure?

7. Reporting – During this stage, the analysis is reported in written form in order to communicate the findings of the study. Care should be taken that the report meets existing scientific criteria, all ethical considerations are met, and that the report is "readable."

The analysis of the data began with the transcriptions of the audio-taped interviews. Each participant was formally interviewed at one setting, however, as mentioned previously, most interviewees had several meetings with the researcher either on the phone or in person prior to the taped interview. Information gained from these pre-interview discussions impacted the researcher and often the information included

vital historical facts about the participant. Handwritten notes were taken during this process and journal entries were recorded after the process concerning the researcher's intellectual and emotional response to the interaction. This valuable data was included in the final interpretation of the results.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the final step outlined by McCracken (1988). Data analysis began at the earliest moment of the interview process, or data collection (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Creswell, 1994). The nature of the design for this study was one of an exploratory nature, in that the questions were not designed with specific answers in mind. The responses from the participants included a wide array of topics, concepts, themes, and specific content. In order for the researcher to effectively and efficiently reduce this large amount of valuable information (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) into smaller common patterns, or themes, the information was coded to help identify commonalities. It was then analyzed for over-arching thematic constructs identified by the researcher, based upon the responses of the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Creswell, 1994).

Coding is defined by Rubin & Rubin (1995) as "the process of grouping interviewees' responses into categories that bring together the similar ideas, concepts, or themes you have discovered, or steps or stages in a process." Coding can include names, evidence, or time sequences. Codes can also reflect more ambiguous variables such as emotions, fears, or thoughts. In this particular study, coding included cultural values and patterns, perceived support from services or people, and obstacles, including emotions, impacting the grief process.

It is important to note that coding is a direct reflection of the person who is completing the coding task. This means that the salient items to the researcher will far more likely be noticed, and therefore coded, than the less salient items to the researcher. In this study, the researcher is a member of the Cherokee Nation, was raised in the approximate geographic location of the interviewees, has an extended family history of parental death, and was diagnosed with a life threatening illness in the midst of the study. Obviously, there exists the possibility of bias on the part of the researcher.

In order to offset the possibility of bias, the researcher took several steps to lessen or alleviate the bias. First, the researcher kept a personal journal throughout the study. While much of the content was personal and seemingly irrelevant to the study, it was reviewed periodically in order for the researcher to be aware of past and present feelings and emotions along the way, and to increase her self-awareness about these feelings. Second, the researcher used peer consultation to process the strong feelings and emotions that might have impacted the study given the sensitive subject matter and the illness diagnosis. She regularly discussed these issues with a colleague intimately acquainted with the researcher, who was also trained in psychology and research. Third, the researcher spent considerable time with each interviewee, checking and rechecking the "details" of their story to ensure the accuracy. This included the pre-interview(s), the interview, and follow-up conversations. Fourth, the transcriptions of the audio-tapes were checked 5 formal times, and countless number of informal re-checks during the coding process. The exact words of the participants were used in the narrative analysis report when possible to support all interpretations based upon codings. Finally, the

researcher used a second reader, the dissertation advisor, to provide more support for the thematic content highlighted in the transcripts.

The purpose of the coding process is to facilitate the organization of the data gathered into coherent groups of commonly themed concepts. These concepts, or themes, were then analyzed by the researcher in an attempt to link them cohesively together into an over-arching theme or themes based upon the participants' responses (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The researcher initially read the transcripts, making notes in the margins as items of interest or relevance were noted. After all transcripts were read once, the notes from the margins were entered into a word processing program for organization and grouping. Several small groups were identified.

The second reading was intended to seek any information not noticed in the first reading. Additional comments and notations were made in the margins in a different colored pen, and then transferred to the word processing program.

The third reading incorporated the use of multi-colored highlighters to organize the information into fewer numbers of larger groupings of data. At this stage, the number of groups was lowered to 5.

The fourth reading of the transcripts was intended to lower the number of over-arching thematic group, and to organize the information within the large groups into categories. Again, colored markers were used to visually highlight the material. The groups were transferred to the word processing program to more easily organize the narrative data. A flow chart was constructed to outline the data.

The fifth and final complete reading was done to verify and re-check the information, rather than to seek additional information. It should be noted that within these 5 complete readings, the transcripts were read in part countless times for verification. The "complete" readings of the transcripts were done by focusing on 1 transcript, reading it throughout, and without flipping to another transcript to compare a detail.

The interpretation of these identified themes provided the basis for the final report, which is conveyed in the following chapter. The final report is presented in a narrative format, including as many direct quotations from participants in support of themes as possible. This was done to preserve the "voice" of the participant as described by Bower (1997). Included in this report are the interpretations of the researcher as gleaned from the informal pre-interviews, the interviews, the field notes, the researcher's personal journal and the literature review (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The final interpretation is presented within the theoretical frame of the Social Developmental Model as conceived by Shapiro (1996).

Due to the nature and the style of the interview, including the selection of participants based on self-report, the information, though rich and expansive, is only as accurate and reflective as the honesty and openness of the interviewee. The degree of trust and rapport established between the interviewer and the interviewee, the skill of the interviewer, and the conception of the questions also affected this accuracy. The results of the study are not intended to represent the entire Native American population, the entire Cherokee nation, or all people experiencing grief. The results were merely intended to provide information from the case study alone, and not to provide information

about other Native American tribal members, or persons who have or may be currently experiencing the grief process (Stake, 1981).

Validity

Qualitative study designs have received mixed support from researchers in psychology for many years. Many feel that science occurs only when you can quantify, or count, a phenomenon. Others feel that science is a much more broad brush that paints over many different methods of analyzing data (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). One of the ways that a study is evaluated for value to the scientific and research community is its validity. The question of validity is basically, "Do the results of the study measure the phenomenon that you think that you are measuring?" (Kvale, 1996; Howell, 1994; Kerlinger, 1979). In the example of this study, does the analysis provide us with information about the grieving process of Native American adults belonging to the Cherokee Nation tribe who experienced the loss of a parent to death during their childhood years?

Marshall & Rossman (1989) suggest that the greatest strength of a qualitative design is its validity. The design allows the interviewer to ask questions that provide a platform for the participant to answer in an open and unrestricted way. Though there is a reliance on the openness and the honesty of the respondent, the information obtained is rich in detail concerning the subject or topic being studied.

Validity for the present study was evaluated at the seven stages of the design as described earlier based upon Kvale's model (1996) of design. It was as follows:

1. Thematizing – Was the research and selection of theory derived from the existing studies, including the derivation of the research questions used to gather the information?

2. Designing – Was the design capable of providing information that is "beneficial" while minimizing the harmful consequences to the participants?

3. Interviewing – How trustworthy were the participants' responses? Was the interview itself of quality? Were the questions adequately followed up to ensure that the intended meaning(s) were communicated?

4. Transcribing – Was the linguistic style of the transcriber appropriate and accurate when transcribing the tapes from oral communication to written word?

5. Analyzing – Was the logic of the interpretations of the data sound and based upon the stated theory?

6. Verifying – What forms of validation were most salient to the present study? Were the appropriate measures taken to ensure validity at the various points of the study?

7. Reporting – Did the report appropriately and accurately reflect the data? Did the report communicate to the reader the intentions of the participants?

In their paper on qualitative studies and validity, Miles & Huberman (1994) assert that there are no rules or set procedures to follow like a cookbook recipe to determine the validity of qualitative research. Based on this premise, Kvale (1996) suggests that to achieve "defensible validity" the qualitative researcher should employ certain techniques along the process. These include: checking the data more than once to ensure accuracy

of coding and interpretations; openly questioning each step and method, seeking always

to disprove the theory using any method available including verifying the participants'

responses when possible; and finally, theorizing about the complexities of the

information/questions in the study including seeking literature sources that may provide

alternative ways of thinking or conceptualizing the problem.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

In this study, Cherokee Indian people, identifying as "traditional" in their cultural

ways, were interviewed to explore the effects of acculturation and tradition on the process

of grieving after the loss of a parent to death while in childhood. The participants were

varied in terms of demographic data such as gender, age, SES, and life experience, but all

were tribal members who identified with the traditional Cherokee way of life. Each of

the participants experienced the death of one of his or her parents, but the gender of the

parent and the age of the participant at the time of the death varied along the continuum.

Many of the participants still live on family land that had been allotted after the

Trail of Tears, some work for, or have retired from, the Cherokee Nation, and all live in a

geographic location that is heavily populated with Cherokee Indian people. The

participants are more fully described in Table I. Each participant was interviewed to gain

his or her unique perspective about the impact of being Cherokee after the death of one of

the parents.

This chapter presents that unique perspective from each participant in a narrative

account, using their own words in order to provide a first hand account of the impact of

being Cherokee and grieving the loss of a parent. This chapter addresses the themes

common among participant issues of grief in the loss of a parent embedded within these

themes. Chapter 5 more directly discusses how the data answers/addresses the study's

research questions about the loss of a parent at such an early age. The participants'

accounts include what it was like being Cherokee, and how each grieved within the

Cherokee community. The accounts also include what it was like to grieve as a Cherokee

person living within the larger community that consisted of non-Indian people unfamiliar with Cherokee grieving practices. The participants also explained some of the coping mechanisms and practices that they used to help them deal with this tragic loss of a parent.

After examining the participants' responses for thematic content, three main categories emerged. The information in this chapter is organized using these three categories. They include importance of Indian way of life, spirituality and the dead person's continued existence, and acceptance of the death demonstrated by getting on with life.

Importance of a Native American Way of Life

The Cherokee Way

Each of the participants in some way described the importance of "being Indian" and how that had affected not only the way that they grieved after the loss of the parent, but also how they chose to live their life both inside and outside the Indian community. These included recognized cultural traditions performed or acted out in a more public setting, such as rituals, dances, or gatherings and less formal ways such as surrounding themselves with other Native people, immersing oneself in nature, or meditation. In one way or another, each stated that "being Indian" helped them deal with this crisis in their lives, and then on throughout their lives as they grew into adults and beyond. As Jim (all names used are pseudonyms and unrelated to the participant's first or last name) stated:

It means pride and strength and history. It is a way of life. We were

always encouraged to look into the past of the People...our ancestors...

we should be very proud and yet humble, but very proud of who we are.

(Our ancestors) were a very strong people. Despite all that was against

them, they survived and did well for us as future generations. They were

survivors. And, uh, we were always taught to look at obstacles as

opportunities as they had done.

There was support from family and friends during the difficult times, the most

difficult of these for the participant being the death of his or her parent. Jim told about

getting the news that his father had been in an accident at work:

So right then I knew…I expected the worse…and I heard the worse. So

we as a very strong family we, we came together of course and supported

each other and about that time it seemed like that mother stepped up from

being always a supporter of the decisions to being a decision maker. We

as more of a follower of our father, had to step up…I mean I am the third

in line son, I have two older brothers and a sister, and we came together

and of course supported each other the best way that we knew how.

At these times it seemed that the importance of family and friends and being

around those most known to them, helped in the grieving process. Joe, 56, talked about

his comfort level around his fellow Native Americans.

I wanted to be around everybody Indian. I wanted to be around Indians. I

didn't want to be around any…any (Cherokee word for White

People)…you know Whites. I was more comfortable…I still to this day

can get around a bunch of them and I feel comfortable. You know, and,

uh, things have changed and everything like that you know. You know,

but I tried to stay with them all the time, even now.

Feeling comfortable around others that share one's values, history, and behaviors is what drives a people to "pass down" traditions (Mooney, 1995). Mary discussed the importance of passing these traditions down through the generations so they will not be lost. She said:

> You have got to know...you watch and you learn. And that is how I learned it. I watched and my grandfather taught me. And I listened. And that is how our ancestors knew...they survived. Today we have radios and TVs and they tell you that there's a storm coming, but we already know. That it was going to rain, or that there was going to be a drought. This is how they lived. That is the things that I am still trying to teach to my children and their children so it will go on. Always. Of course, my granddaughters, it is already instilled in them that their grandmother is talking so it is time to listen. You listen. That part of it, you can already see that they are carrying on, she has passed to them. It is that important. To listen and to learn what you can.

By following the ways of the Cherokee the younger generations gain the strength they need to be successful in life and to cope with the inevitable hurts that occur in life. Mary continued:

> This is right. I think that, that kindly, you know from the beginning it strengthens them, and as they grow up and they continue doing things like, with herbs and elders, it makes them stronger in handling situations that come up.

The elders and tribal members who are aged are considered gems and wells of

wisdom. It is important in the community to show the proper respect for one's elders by listening to their words and adhering to their ways without questioning them or challenging them. Jane recalled visits to her grandmother's house. She said:

> We just did it. You know, when I was growing up, you never questioned or ah, I mean out of curiosity yes, but when an adult, and authority figure said this was it, this the way its going to be, that's the way it was, you didn't question authority any, and Grandma was a cherished person in the community, um, I guess, when I worked in the schools as a Teachers Aide, I had one, another Aide that was in charge of the XXX program tells me, she said, of all the XXX kids I've got here, she said they all end up being, branching off to your Grandma she said. But Grandma, you know, she had a lot, she only had about 5 kids but somehow another, she was everybody's Grandma.

Mary expressed similar sentiments as she spoke about her husband, who had died a few years earlier, and his relationship with his granddaughters. She said:

> After all these years, and after my husband died. But he had so many good ways and uhh...and that...he never talked a lot. But when he did! You listened, it meant something. So uhh, they knew, uhh...from that they knew to listen. Because as Native American Indians we always teach our young kids to respect the senior adults. Your elders. Listen to them. They know what they are talking about. And they have already been through that and that's why they know. But you know young people, you all think that you always know everything. But you have not been

through what we have. And their lives are so much different. They had to struggle a lot. And, it was hard times. Being brought up you know. For now young people have things and so...those kinds of things you know.

In addition to respect for elders, Cherokee people show respect for each other by supporting the grieving family by bringing food, completing household chores and doing other things to help, allowing the family to focus on their grief and each other. After the death of her mother, Mary recalls friends and relatives coming to their home and bringing food and finishing chores like cutting firewood, and bringing herbs and traditional burial remedies to help ease the families pain.

Like I say, we just always talked, you know talked about it. That is just how we know...There was a lot of emotions that come up you know in those discussions. But the neighbors and friends helped us a lot too you know. They come and brought food and they cut wood and helped with the gardens and...it was a big help. And you know we didn't ask, they just come. That changed how it was for us. Made it better. When we buried her, they come and they brought the herbs and...and that is to take away the bad...the...and the loneliness from us. And we used it. And it helped. At the gates of the cemetery, we took the herbs and burned them you know. And we had put some hair and her favorite locket in with her. Before she passed away she had said that is what she...so we did. And to me, that is just sooo soothing. You know. And, ...I don't know if it is just that you strongly believe that so...you know...what causes that...but anyway...that is what we did.

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The importance of the culture more likely is passed from generation to generation than from formal teaching like reading about the traditional ways or methods in a book. Jill talked about taking her children with her to make visits to older Cherokees living in the community. Though she doesn't remember sitting down and discussing what they did and what they saw with her children, she knows it got through to them because she sees it in their lives today in how they are raising their own children. She said:

> And then, I tried to I would show them, teach them, include them in Cherokee things like oh um, ... uh, been to the medicine man, one daughter has, um, and then I worked for the XXX. I worked for like, close to 20 years, and I worked with the community, so and I would say that I took my girls everywhere with me , since they were real little, like 5, I think ...so then I began to work with the Cherokee tribe and I worked with the community, mostly for ... and I would take my kids with me, so I think that they got, you know, you don't think they have culture, but they got more of the culture than a lot of other people that live with their full blood parents. Both Cherokee, I think my kids were exposed to all of this, because we went into a lot of peoples homes and whenever I worked with community groups, they always had their dinners, they got exposed to their food, all kinds of traditional things.

She went on to say that when things go wrong in her life today, or in her children's lives, they find themselves reverting back to the traditional ways. She says:

> The way I taught my girls, maybe there's a time come that we will be at such a place that we will, you know, when you get into a tragic incident

you revert back to your childhood prayers, oh please Lord, just let it be, so

I said, you never know, we might after a while, anything that might help

we might do, but so far, we haven't gotten to that point, but we know it's

there.

Bill also believed that the traditions and the values of the Cherokee should be passed

along. He believed that as children grew, they got away from the traditional teachings

making it more difficult for them to accept the traditions later on:

Yeah start when they are little to get that interest. Don't try to start when

they are 13 or 14 because then they are interested in malls and rock and

roll. It is something that has to be from the cradle.

Jim echoed those thoughts:

Once you go through, get by that, then you start feeling like thinking more

about how it was that you were raised, and you know, like I say, if you

will teach a child something early he will remember it his whole life.

Jim credited the Cherokee way with getting him and his family through not only the

tough time of losing his father, but other tough times as well. In his words:

Really, I felt privileged to be able to do it that way, you know. Because,

because of the way the females handled it in the Cherokee tradition, one,

one can only imagine, but I, I think that we share, that in the Cherokee

way, to think Cherokee, speak Cherokee and to be Cherokee, live

Cherokee, is, is, very very uhh, community and it's a privilege. It is a gift.

And, once, once that you realize the gift that you have, the Cherokee way

is very, very peaceful. When you have all the things…it is very very easy to be overcome by the world and not think, you know, get away from the Cherokee way of thinking. You know I think back about how I overcame some of the most severe times in my life, and it is transferring to our way. I get caught up sometimes, and I lose this fact that the world or our society is different. But I am not thinking Cherokee. Like when I get in my car and I am going to a reunion in Tulsa, I will be driving back and I will be thinking about this meeting and that meeting and what I need …and then I will think…the Cherokee way is about peace…and you don't get in a hurry and worry about…its about peace and harmony and being together.

Losing the Cherokee Way

While the participants were in general agreement that the "old ways of the People" were useful and should be carried from generation to generation, both the younger and the older participants also agreed that the traditional ways were fading away. Jack, one of the younger participants (24 years of age), stated:

I think it is just as the world keeps changing, you know, we just kind all get away from the old ways, and the way things were done…you know I didn't get to do a lot of things that my grandparents did, but …you know like my brother, we are 6 years apart, and he didn't do a lot of things that I did…

Participant Bill, a man in his late 50's who has worked for the various Indian tribes and agencies across the United States, including his native Cherokee tribe, and has seen the way many different tribes continue, or discontinue, their traditions. He put it this

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way:

>Well, it is, it is, changing so much. The traditional ways you know. They
>try to keep it up, but they are kind of moder...modernizing it. Too,
>instead of being the old traditional ways. You can go to a PowWow now,
>back then it was all free...now they charge you to park! They charge you
>to get in...that is not tradition. You see. Anymore it is, it is just money
>instead of ...like I wanted to go be with the Cherokee...it should be freely
>given...you know. Yes. It is all dying out. You know, like the...when
>someone dies...Like the beautiful ritual that goes on for 3 days...and it is,
>it is, I think it is a very emotional moving experience. And, but, they
>don't do that cultural thing anymore. It is more like...like modern. That
>is a tradition that is gone.

For some, the boarding schools were a source of the loss of traditional ways. At
the boarding schools, traditional dress was not allowed, and speaking the Native tongue
was often severely punished. In essence, these schools meant a denial of their cultural
heritage in that they were often not allowed to "be Indian." The younger participants,
who attended public schools, faced ridicule and segregation if they were "too Indian"
even in their predominantly Indian geographic area where maybe 60% or more of the
students were Cherokee or members of another tribe. Mary recalled learning when to use
and when not to use her Native language.

>Yeah, so...we spoke the Cherokee language at home. When we went to
>school, we had to speak English there of course. But when we come
>home, we had to switch. (laughs). It was Cherokee there. It's not that we

are not still mistreated. But it is done in a way that it is covered…you

don't notice it that much…and…and…when you, when you come up and

talk to me, my skin is different, I am different. I have brown eyes, brown

hair. And we look at each other and I wonder…you have always got that

part where you wonder if you will be…if they'll treat you right. And

you're probably not going to know to your face…some way or another it

seems like you always feel like you want to keep protecting yourself. And

keep from getting hurt. And uhh…like for me…like my ancestors were

only given a small time…we left everything when my family came

here…it was hard and they had little…and then we picked some land,

what they gave and started over. And this is where my family has been,

where I was born. This is ours now, but it was hard for a long time for my

family, for others too. They had to go off and grow gardens and eat from

the trees. My grandparents were strong. There were terrible winters and

hard times. The White People were not kind and made it very hard. I hate

to say that because I know that you are not all Indian, and that you are

White, but they were the ones that made it so hard. And that carries over

until today for the People. It seems like Indian people just get on their feet

and something else happens. It is hard to believe, to trust. You just kind

of always kind of protect yourself, so that you don't get hurt, by…others.

This is a problem that continues for Native American people today. Mary

describes a friend of hers who is mixed race of Native American and Caucasian. This is

how she describes his experience:

That is my thinking and you know, I am full-blood. This is...I am

speaking now...from a full-blood. I don't know but I have some friends

who are quarters, maybe a little more, and we think differently. There are

things that are hard for me and him to do because we are different. And

yet sometimes we are the same. He comes from a big family. And when

something happens he will say, now that is my Indian side coming out.

And then other times, that is my White side. He has brothers and sisters

that never was brought up...and they don't live the Indian way...and so it

is hard for him to know...to be...you know. And so he said it is a fight to

go back and forth, and to know when to ...be...to be what. And that is

kindly the way that you are, I am sure...See and being full-blood I never

notice it. I never stop to think. I never thought about it. It was just

always there. This is who I am...and he said he can't do that. He has to

stop and think. Sometimes he has to be White and sometimes he has to be

Indian...never...fully...depends upon where he's at you know.

Todd recalls times with his mother when she denied her heritage. He laughed, though it

seemed to be painful for him, that his mother denied knowing the language. He said:

Well see like, like on that traditional, she was put down for. You know

when she was growing up you wasn't supposed to speak anything but

English. So...when I was...when my brother...my brother got most of

that because, see there was a big age gap between my brother and me. So,

he was raised...her mother was still alive and followed many of the

traditions. So that is where he got all that Cherokee influence. They was

deceased by the time that I come along, and my mom, like I say, when she went to school she was persecuted for it...so ...she wouldn't say much about those things. To tell you the truth, if you come in the room she'll be talking to those people, or that cat, but if you ask her she will deny it. I mean she won't come out and say that, she just denies that she knows the language and stuff. And uh, the ladies tease her all the time about it. You know, talk Cherokee to her in front of me, and she would say "I don't understand you," and they would say "Yeah, yeah you did!!" (laughs).

Mary talked about the pain of adapting to the dominant culture, living at times an almost duplicitous life to survive and to be successful.

We were just told so much that we were doing it right, it didn't matter that our ways weren't like their ways. Our ways were different than of the world's so we would just put ours aside like that and then go home and be...you know...do what we knew...we would just learn their ways because you know we wanted...well you are going to have to learn them to survive so we did. But yet you don't really complete...you know believe it. The way you were taught, what you believe is always there. But it is true...you have do what you have to do to survive...to be a part of them. So we did. It was just something that I had...you know it just goes with life.

Other participants remember feeling that their classmates wanted them to talk about their experience more than they felt comfortable. They preferred to grieve privately, with family, and felt alienated, and "on stage" when they attended school. Both claimed that

this experience arrested their educational development and impacted success in the system. Jake, a 35 year old father of one, remembers it this way:

Yeah, I just uhh...that was my way of doing what that I think was...uhh..i didn't want to be around nobody. Uh, I just didn't even like talking about it you know, because, of the hurt. And then the, you know, when I went back to school, you know kids, they, you know, always want to ask you, you know, what happened. I mean, and you know, sorry to hear about your mom, and....you know, different stuff. And that, and that was really hard you know, and at times, very moody. (laughs). You know, but it wasn't their fault, it was just...I guess, my way of dealing with it, you know. And then, then I think I would uhh...my teacher at the time, she would ask me, call me off to myself. And, she was asking me, you know, if I felt, how I felt about it, and I was telling her, you know, and she was a big, she was a big help, cause she talked to the class. You know, I think on one of the days I'd missed or something, cause I just couldn't handle the pressure. And she had talked to the class and told them, that you know, I didn't want to talk about it, you know, and just, you know, to let it, to let me have my time, you know. So that was, that was a good part on hers, you know, I just wanted to be by myself, you know, or just be around, you know, that was fine being around everybody...But you know and the grades fell and...and a lot of attendance was you know missed.

Paul recalled a similar experience. He had been active in sports and other extracurricular activities but after the death of his father he changed the ways he felt comfortable

interacting with his peers. This is how he remembered that time:

> Uhhh, it was...it was tough to go back. Uhh, I mean, my mind wasn't
> really in school. And, I don't know, I was , I was, it is kind of funny to
> say, but again I was a little embarrassed too because when I went back to
> school everybody was looking at me, and uhhh...it was a little
> embarrassing. I know that sounds real bad, but it just felt like everybody
> was looking at me. Yeah, yeah, like I say I just wanted to, like I say, a lot
> of people many of my friends, teachers, uhh, I was playing football at the
> time, my football coach, they all, they all tried to, tried to talk to me about
> it. And I didn't...I didn't want to talk about it. Course of everybody on
> the list wanted to do something for you, but I kind of balled myself up,
> and uhh...and as I said it was hard to focus on sports really. My grades
> really took a tee-totaling. My mind was on other things. I just said the
> hell with it.

Joe, 56, remembers going to school after his father died. He had been a "loner" by his
own admission prior to the death of his father, but the need to be alone increased after his
death. He recalled:

> I mean, it didn't take me, it didn't take me too long, it took me a little
> while, but that, but that, messed me up in school so I had to take 12th grade
> over. I know that. Because I just didn't care about nothing.

Jane didn't feel supported in school either. She remembers:

> No. Not really. I a, I think the only thing, at the time my dad died I
> was in school, my teacher at the time, I felt like, wasn't sympathetic or did

not know how to express ... the situation because I .... but I went to

school up until the funeral and a, just like my teacher chose to ignore that.

So, although most of the participants described feeling supported at home, with

their families, and within the family traditions, they did not feel a sense of support

outside, especially at school where they dealt with other persons who seemed to not

understand what it was that they were going through as they grieved the loss of their

parent. Attendance dropped, grades fell, and the participants reported that they most

often retreated into themselves, choosing to be alone rather than constantly face the

outside.

Spirituality

Religion Old and New in Spirituality

Spirituality has long been an integral part of the Native American experience

whether one is talking about organized religion such as Christianity, or the more

traditional religion and belief structure of the tribal people. Along the Trail of Tears, and

certainly after in the Cherokee settlements, Christian missionaries became a strong

influence, "converting" many from their native religion. This remains a point of

contingency for many Native people today as they struggle to balance the "old religion"

with the new.

Regardless of whether one is speaking about the Baptist faith (Baptist

missionaries were perhaps the strongest influence on the Cherokee people at the end of

the Trail of Tears) or Traditional faith in the Creator, or appreciating Nature by

respecting the Earth, spirituality and faith is common thread referred to be every

participant in this study. It is a powerful influence in not only how each of them grieved,

but how they coped with their loss and continued with their lives. Joe, though self-described as "not highly religious" recognizes the important cultural history of spirituality.

> I know you got have it...Cherokee ancestors are very religious...they believed you had to have it...they believed in all that magic too, you know...

Jim remembers attending a traditional Baptist church where the theology was Christian but the influence was uniquely Cherokee. The church's influence was so pervasive, it even made an impact on who would marry whom.

> We hunted and fished. And we went to Church. We attended a Baptist church there close, and it was very traditional. The preacher preached and we sang all the songs in Cherokee. It was beautiful. Occasionally, we would do the ceremonial Baptist way, which was in English, but not much. It seemed we did the Traditional Baptist way more often. This was important to the family because it often came to who you would marry. You know, the clan that you belonged to mattered, and it really kind of set, you might say who you married. And the church helped regulate you might say, this.

But the traditional Cherokee spirituality was not forgotten. Jim later explained that after the death of his father, the family turned to a traditional healer, an elder, to gain spiritual guidance.

> We all were together and got us through the grieving process, but there were certain things that we just didn't partake in at that time. Because of

that, well we always had uh, very spiritual Cherokee man that would help

us do the ceremonies and several...well to get through the grieving

process. And it took a very strong man to do that. And with all that, we

were able to get together and work as a family, and work this thing

through.

Balancing between the old and new worlds is a constant dilemma for Native

Americans. Jim describes it this way:

Uh, it was something that was practiced, but in our family we, living in the

two worlds, that is the traditional which to me more, the traditions of

Indian religion and the other traditional values of the church, which are

similar, but... The traditional stomp dance you know has the two sides.

We could, we could go along with both. We kind of drew our own lines,

and say how, how long are we going to participate in this or that. My

mom always said, "I'm going to let you children decide for yourselves.

Because you guys know what to do that is right." And we did, we kind of

knew where she would draw the line...

Mary also recalls seeking to find a balance between the old ways of spirituality

and the new. She is very active in her church affiliation but holds on to the old ways of

her people as well, referring to God as the Creator and remaining always mindful of

man's responsibility to nature and his need to be respectful for Earth's provisions.

I try and of course when my husband was living, ... we took them a lot,

he was a great ... hunted, so, to get that experience, we took them a lot –

camping and fishing, and a lot of things of nature and animals, insects and

all kinds of things like that. We would teach them about that and also the tradition that his ancestors had brought here and still going on now .. and that has taught them a lot. And they meet month-to-month and they talk to them people about the ways, reading the nature, and rivers and respecting all of that ...... and love everybody. (She continues later in the interview) As a Sunday school teacher I try to bring them in to there, with the other teaching too. If I can. In fact this past summer, last year, uhh, I made a garden. Where that...there was 3 sisters we will call it. And that is corn, the beans and the squash. And you plant them, in the, in the same field. And where corn has shallow roots, that needs the moisture. Whereas the squash has biigg leaves that shades those roots and makes a funnel for the water. And the beans puts back in what the corn takes out of the soil. And so that uhh a lot of times is a good illustration that I use for the children. And like in our church, they always talk about the trinity. And, so...I say that is my illustration. And...how...we had to be...and our ancestors had to be...and that is why that I really stress to them you have to be really close to the creator for Him to talk to you to tell you ...guide you. Everyday you have to have that time. Thank him. Ask him to watch over you. And uhh, that is what I keep stress...talk to them about. What I teach them. But now then I have got my grandsons. 6, 3, and 2, so...now then I talk to them about being...close to the Creator. And everything is about the nature and being with Him. The leaves turn this way and it means that this kind of weather is coming...and that type

of thing. It will tell us. You have got to know…you watch and you learn. And that is how I learned it. I watched and my grandfather taught me. And I listened. And that is how our ancestors knew…they survived. Today we have radios and TVs and they tell you that there's a storm coming, but we already know. That it was going to rain, or that there was going to be a drought. This is how they lived. That is the things that I am still trying to teach to my children and their children so it will go on.

Spirits, Magic, and Spirituality

Traditional Cherokee spirituality also includes a belief in a spirit world that is ever-present, mystical, and at times, might even be described as scary, or spooky. Some of the participants remember times, often at a grandmother's house, when a reference was made to a "sign" or an omen from nature of an impending event, often a tragic one.

Jane remembers visiting her grandmother, who lived in the country, and having to go inside to play before dark. She recalls:

> The only thing I guess that made me realize that there was something
>
> different was the stories my dad would tell me about the little people,
>
> You know, and about a, the a, I don't know what you call it, I know what
>
> it is in Cherokee, but in English, I guess I think they maybe call it the
>
> Raven Mocker, we have a name for it in Cherokee, anyway, he'd tell me
>
> stories about that and a, my grandmother, my grandmother was, since my
>
> grandfather died when I was about a year old, and in the summertime, my
>
> mom and I would go visit her. She lived by herself out in the country, no
>
> electric, no running water, and we'd go stay maybe a couple weeks with

her. So, when it started getting dark at night, granny would tell us to come in the house and not to be playing. Of course, we'd want to know why. And we'd say, "why granny," she didn't speak English, so she'd talk in Cherokee, and she said there's going to be spirit join you if you play after dark, you'll see somebody else, she said, just come on in the house, so, we never questioned her.

Joe recalls the beliefs of great-grandfather being so strong in the power of dreams that he would enter a dark night to ward off the evil spirits that arrive in dreams.

My great grandfather believed that when you had dreams, no matter what time of the night, you would wake up with a bad dream, he would walk across the farm field, I don't know how far it was, from his house to my grandfather's house, but he would come and check on the family to see if they were all right. Because he had had a scary dream. Of course, they believed in that.

Jill recalled times with her aunts and grandmother when they would stop and listen to the sound of a bird calling in the wild and perform a ritual to counteract the omen of the bird's call. She stated that she wasn't afraid, and that she didn't believe in this superstition, but several times during the interview as we sat in a park, she stopped and listened and made reference to the same bird. She also recalled a time when, in a group of people, a smoking pipe was passed among the group members. To not smoke the pipe is a sign of disrespect and signals an impending tragic event if you decline and do not make amends. This is how she recalled the events:

...and one day we were out there just talking like this in the dark, she said, you hear that? And I .... and I said yeah, she said, do you know what it is, and I said yeah, she said well what is it, I said .... my grandmother ... go home she'd tell us stories on the porch after dinner and when that bird, I don't even know if it's a wheelabird or whatever, but it's a certain kind of bird. It's a country bird, where people are, someone stayed country and this bird that's sound .... this sound means somebody is bothering you, so, and while I don't like do it, I don't axe it, when you hear that sound its like oh...It brings you back to that time when you were listening to your grandma tell the story and she ..... porch, in the summertime when we left the home and we were going to stay with her while she was still out there, first time she did it, it was like a she would stop for like, 4 or 5 seconds, then she would continue on with her story. And the second time it did it, she got up ... look in the window to see what she was doing and she was putting something in the stove, so all the traditional, cultural things, we're aware of it, we know of it, while we don't do it, there are some in my family I didn't know that did it, but I just ... live by it, but I was the youngest, I don't know if I didn't get that part of it or what happened, but, while, somebody will say well .... it doesn't scare me at all, but some people it puts the fear in them. You know, they go, ohhh and boy they're off to walking, but somebody can tell me that, I was working at the community center one time and this whole group said we have to smoke this pipe ..... well I didn't smoke, you know, so I said go on without me I

wasn't about to say ain't going to do it,   oh I will when I get home,

well I never did and of course nothing happened to me, but, but I wasn't

about to you know say, oh no, you know since I had been included, they

obviously thought that I know all about this and probably maybe I do.

Cherokee Indians traditionally referred to spiritual creatures, called Little People,

who are simultaneously feared and respected. The Little People are small sized human-

like spirits that not all human people are privileged to see. Some legends state that seeing

the Little People is a bad omen, followed by someone in the family becoming very ill and

likely dying. Others believe that the Little People come to those in dire need and help

them through dangerous or tough spots. Bill talks about his experiences with the Little

People:

> Well, the old saying is …you see they are really little and they live just
>
> right down here, see out there. And they are just about that tall (motions
>
> about 2-3 feet off ground). But she said that if you ever see'd one you was
>
> gonna get lost. But uh…your memory is all gone, you can't think of a
>
> thing. You don't remember seeing them, see…? You might even die, get
>
> real bad sick. And this lady right here (points out the window) across the
>
> field here, across the road here, she's …saw one, she …got real bad sick.
>
> Got a real bad fever and she almost died. Then she got a little better but
>
> died real soon later. That's what her relations say. See back in the old
>
> days we used to all get together over here across the field here. It is just
>
> right over here. My cousin lives right over there. But we had a pond…we
>
> had trails all up and down over here, and summer time like this, hot as it

is, people would be down there fishing...they loved to fish. Then we would take the fish and have bread and beans and everything, and they would cook and we would have a big meal. We was all sitting around in the back yard there, at the pond there, and my uncle got up and said look at that deer. It was at the pond and it didn't have no head. It was standing at the pond. He said it was some kind of a spirit. You know when you see an animal...I had been taught like when there was a coyote or something, or there was an, that somebody in the family is going to die. And then, if a rooster crows in the evening, it is the same. Something bad is gonna happen to someone in the family.

Mary also experienced the Little People. This is a story she recalled about her husband. She used the story to illustrate her belief in a greater power, and how if you will trust the land, trust the Creator by being open to the signs, your needs will be provided for.

He communicated with what they call the Little People. And, there is very few people who can do that. And uh, there were times uhh...well he never abused them. But, and uhh he could call on them and they would come and they would help him. And uhh, there is one story that uh, he, and a lot of times when he, and you don't tell anyone, you know when, you need to share the story, but not everytime. When to tell the story. God tell you. The Creator is always there to tell you now is the time. And that is the way that he was. He never questioned that. And when the time come to share he did. But he was fishing, and it was just a short leap across there,

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where he was at. And he was gonna fish that night. And he got there late, and there was these shad just thick along the edge of the water. And he had a throw net there and he could just throw it out and get all the bait that he wanted and he didn't have to buy it. But, …so…he was just having problems and all he could get were just a few this time. And he was thinking, I have got to do something here, because it is going to get dark on me here and I won't have any bait for tonight, or I won't be able to fish. And he said, uhh…I don't know what to do, this always works. Maybe I should just go home and forget about fishing tonight. But he said, no…they said that this is the place to be right now. And here it comes. The shad that he wanted, or would like to have had were across the water, from him, and he could see them just working that water. And he said he looked over and a beaver was on the edge of the water, you know one of the Little People come down, and he said to him what do I do? And he said come to this spot. And so he went on down and it wasn't 15 minutes or so, he said, the shad started to move down the stream to him and he looked and the old beaver was moving away and he said, thank you! Brought them over here to him, he said. Those kinds of things he would share with us, you know. You know that happened to him.

Peace and Spirituality in Nature

Jack, one of the younger participants, speaks about finding peace in nature.

When I was little….you know I was raised…we had a lot of freedom kind of to uh, you know like as far as fishing and things like that…uh, so uh I

think …I kind of…you know I done that since I was little so…uh, and you know the generation now kind of doesn't do a lot of things that we did, just you know, a little over ten years ago, so…that is kind of faded like that…

Joe uses the outdoors to relieve his angry feelings and his stress of daily life. He says:

Like today, …used to when I would get angry, I would go for long walks…just walk all over …the woods…anywhere…now today the same thing is to go get on my motorcycle and drive all over. If I get jittery or something I can go for a ride or a spin around.

Mary meditates and uses her gardening as a spiritual experience. She believes that she is closest to the Creator when she is outside and working with the Earth. This is her description:

I try and of course when my husband was living, …. we took them a lot, he was a great … hunted, so, to get that experience, we took them a lot – camping and fishing, and a lot of things of nature and animals, insects and all kinds of things like that. We would teach them about that and also the tradition that his ancestors had brought here and still going on now .. and that has taught them a lot. And they meet month-to-month and they talk to them people about the ways, reading the nature, and rivers and respecting all of that …… and love everybody.

Later in the interview, Mary explained how she and her siblings found comfort after the death of their mother.

But I remember the time, in the next morning…it was in November…a

biiggg frost had come…and when the sun came up those trees and leaves

just shone…it was beautiful. But to me even though that it has been

taught that in that, that was God is there. It was so calm, those

leaves…and my grandmother told me…(unintelligible). It was Ok. We

all went for a walk that day and we went across the field and they had cut

the corn that day. And they had left a lot of it in the field. And we picked

some up, took it back with us. But I remember looking up at my

grandmother and wondering what she was thinking. What she thought.

She is probably thinking how am I going to raise these kids? And she

must have…she had only raised one child and that was my mother. And

here she was with three of us…four of us. And…but she never

complained. She never showed she was worried. But that was just our

time to be together. We stayed for awhile watching the field, not talking.

Although at that age I didn't even know to meditate, but I knew that she

was worried…afraid to raise us. From there on, I just knew, I just knew

that He was gonna take care of us. That He was gonna help her so that she

could deal with how to raise us. And she did. And then when she passed

on, she said well, I need to talk to you. She said I…we don't breathe a

long time. The energy ends, we just don't do it. I have lived all these

years. I asked God to leave me here until ya'll was old enough to take

care of yourselves and He has. And she knew…and that is what she left in

my ear. And I always…I shared it with my brothers and sisters. Because

they were there. And so that has just kind of reinforced in me, you know

growing up, that there He is there for us.

Mary remembers her grandfather, a full-blood Cherokee Indian who was what the older

generation call a "Nighthawk Keetowah" Indian (one who follows the strictest of

tradition in the Indian religion, participating in rituals, sacrifices, dances, and other

traditional rites) teaching her about the spirituality of Nature. She remembered this:

> The only thing that I remember is that my grandfather always got us a
>
> flowers herbs, and would take us to the graveyard. And uhh..he is
>
> Nighthawk Keetowah you know. And he would take us to this tree and
>
> we would know something was behind it you know. So we would stand
>
> and wait for the sign. And when it came he would tell us. And we would
>
> take 7 cups of water in our hands and you would throw it over into the
>
> stream, you know 7 times. And that is just like taking that feeling...all of
>
> that...and washing it down the running water. The running water is taking
>
> it away. And you stand there and you think about it. You know the water
>
> is sooo important to us. We use it for...you know...in medicine, in food,
>
> brew our teas and herbs with, some of it you don't even use, and you give
>
> it back to the Earth. You just take it, and again, it takes a certain person to
>
> understand this, and it is a person that was born to understand this. You
>
> know a person who chooses...like a baby who is born and you take to the
>
> Elders to be sprinkled with the water. This is very important. Or a baby
>
> you know that is born with that rash, that redness, the elder...all he does is
>
> take a drink of the water and blow on that baby's mouth 4 times. And that

rash will leave. But that is the Elder's gift. That is what was given to him,

that he was, was born to do. But you know, that was a lot of help at that

time, you know, the herbs and stuff. Like I say, wash your hands, wash

your face in the water, wash it away. That was a big help. It was

soothing. I know that was the best for us…in our family.

The Spirit Remains

Knowing that the spirit of the deceased parent remained with the participant

throughout life seems to be an important part of the grieving process. Though the parent

was no longer present in body, he or she continued to have influence over the participant

in terms of behavior, motivation, and emotion. Jim recalled the importance his father's

presence has had for him and for his family in this way.

> You know we didn't have a father figure in our family, but…the values
>
> and things and the morals that he had instilled in us are still there. And uh,
>
> you know he may not be physically, but spiritually he still is. The father
>
> figure you know is still there. My father was a storyteller. If there was,
>
> uh, before church where ever he stood there would be a gathering of men
>
> talking and telling stories. After church he was out there and people
>
> would gather around and he would be telling stories. Cherokee stories are,
>
> are…most of the terminology in Cherokee are descriptive words. We try
>
> to use characters that represent and then to tell a story in Cherokee…you
>
> know you have to tell a joke with it, you know to tell just a story…it is
>
> very very boring. Cherokee people are that way, they tell a joke. And
>
> when we remember those kind of things, then those, that, everything little

thing that you could hold on to, on how we were raised, then you feel like,

I mean even though you move forward you feel like he is still a part of

you. Once you step back and picture that, we use the word numbing, once

you get through that numbing I guess about after a week, and you go

through the ceremonies with the preachers and the Cherokee spiritual

people are coming to you and letting you…and trying to get you through.

Once you go through, get by that, then you start feeling like thinking more

about how it was that you were raised, and you know, like I say, if you

will teach a child something early he will remember it his whole life. Oh

yes, I still hear his voice today.

Mary recalls leaving food on the table for her mother after she died. Later, she talks

about doing a similar thing for her grandmother after her death, and then many years later

for her husband after his death.

Uh, another thing that…that we do…uhhh…when we put them away, then

they have a banquet. And there is food and people get together you know.

The women together cooking and the men together, the men outside

smoking and talking. And you remember and you talk about the person.

You know there is always a favorite thing from the person, and you know

what it is, and you put that in the coffin with them. And then you still for

uhh…so many days, you take it to them if you can, or you know you set

the table place for them, if it is a food, and you do that for 3 days. And

that uhh…also, uhh so that they will come back, you know their spirit.

Their spirit comes back until it passes over to the, the final place. Like my

grandmother, you know back in those days, it was different. And she

would leave it out all the time for her, in case she came back and she was

hungry.

Jane believes that trouble might have been in the way for her had it not been for her Dad,

who was a minister and his memory, or spirit.

I feel like it kept me out of trouble as a teenager. The memory of my dad,

how he would react about choices that I, could have made, I always felt

like he was right there watching me. Yeah. So, it really wasn't hard to

make some of the choices that I did because I knew if I went this way, he

would have been very disappointed in me. So, I never had a problem with

making a choice about drinking and stuff like that because I never did, I

knew that was something I would not want to do, because I knew that if

my dad was living, he wouldn't be happy about it, … …….those teenage

years are so confusing.

Bill, worried about the impending death of his grandfather, the man who had raised him

most of his life, was comforted by his grandfather's words.

And my grandfather, when he died, he told…he knew that he was going to

die. He told me, in church, don't worry, don't worry about a thing. He

said I am going away, but I will always be by your side. That's why I

believe, sometimes he'll come through, or he'll beat on something and

make a noise, and my wife will hear it, and I'll say oh it is just

grandfather. He'll knock, and I'll know it. I can feel it, sometimes. I can

even smell him sometimes, that smoke he used to do. And my ex-wife,

things that she heard and saw really frightened her sometimes. They don't frighten my wife now (who is White). She don't even worry about the little creatures running by her window (laughs).

When Jim gets bogged down in daily life, and feels that things are too difficult, he remembers the work ethic his father modeled for the family.

> ...but he always was a hard worker and he provided for us. Always found opportunity, always found a way to stay ahead. And in today's time, you know for me at my job and with my children...I just have to smile at myself and think "Piece of cake" (laughs). With compared to what my father had to go through to provide. And as long as I remember that, remember him working hard and coming in late in the evenings just exhausted from working construction...then, then...so one thing that really stands out...is hard work. Hard work and don't stand back and let opportunity come to you...go and get it. And like yesterday, I had, I had to do a lot of chores around the house, and, and you just do it! You just have to do it. And, break a sweat, and I mowed all the lawn, and because I saw him do it so many times, and there is not enough time in the day to get it all done. But there is always tomorrow.

Getting On With Life

Practical Reality of Living Life: Resiliency

Native Americans, like many other minority groups, have faced their fair share of adversity. Cherokee Indians may have faced more than their fair share after the Trail of Tears that took so many of their lives and altered the course of Cherokee history forever.

Cherokee families were torn apart and divided, through death, geography and politics. The Cherokees who remained in the Carolinas, Tennessee and Georgia formed the Eastern Band of Cherokees, and those settling in the West, mainly Oklahoma Territory, formed the Western Band of Cherokees. For many generations, there was a political and emotional rift between the two bands. Over the years, the culture and customs of the Bands became as divergent as between any other tribe. The resiliency and the strength required to overcome such adversity is both a source of pride and of pain for Cherokees today. This adaptability, this resiliency, is reflected in the participants' stories.

> No, I have always felt there's …Cherokees of some stories have…have have been called the Lost Tribe of Judah. In fact, I used to not accept that at a younger age. And…as I go on and get older…I don't think…I don't think that that is a bad thought. If we want to try to overcome….with what the Cherokees had to endure, during the harshest times of the history, to have to come through the Trail of Tears, from the Carolinas and Georgia, I think that is one of the most difficult times…I have been down the trail, and I have driven it in air conditioned cars, and had plenty of time to pack and food in the back and it still wears me out just to drive it. And to only think that they came through with such adverse conditions. And they lost 25% of the population to build on …I always think it was meant for the Cherokees to be here and to endure and to survive. And, and as long as we keep that in mind, you know we could have been terminated on that trail. That was the intent. But to still be here. Uh, I think the Cherokees and many other people probably, but the Cherokees

for sure are, are very resilient people with their traditions and probably one of the very few tribes that kept all their traditions intact. So we hold on to that. Hey I feel like that those are the things that we are supposed to do. We are, we are supposed to be the peacemakers of today. That is our responsibility. And, I think what it does...we have seen that we have to go through the trials and the tribulations and it prepares us for something a little bit harsh...but once he have gone through that we have prepared ourselves for...I don't think that there is anything out there in society that we can't handle. (Jim)

After the death of Jim's father, his large family faced many obstacles and his words and beliefs were tested.

As a big family you know we uh, there were just a lot of things that needed to be addressed. We hung very tight and just went on. What it, what it did, was it made me realize what, what had actually happened during this time, well it was time to grow up. It was time to, uhh, not be so dependent and we all have to do that, no matter what the reasons. Sooner or later. You can, you can go to 16, or you can go over 30 and you know some people I guess never grow up. By the virtue of what happened, it was time for me to grow up. I was forced to grow up sooner than I wanted to.

Mary's belief in God helped her through difficult times, but there was also a harsh realism and practicality to her words.

All things come around. And that is what we do. We wait and we believe that it will. The Lord knows and will help and we will just continue on as we can. That is what we have done. We cannot go around always upset. We have to be strong. We have to go on. I would sit and talk to her and she would talk to me and tell me about that I would probably have, take on the responsibility, my responsibility to my family, a helper to my family. I was only 7. And uhh…so she uhh…never said why but…after…several years then I knew what she was telling me. Was that she knew that she wouldn't be there for long. And she was uhh…getting me prepared. And uh…you do, you talk to your children that way…so that you want to have everything out in the open and they are going to know this is what she told me and this is what she said. So…therefore it is not…because from then on, I knew then well gosh this what mom told me…so I am going to have the responsibility for the family…do what I can…raising the children. Like I said, she (her mother) always said you had to get on with your living. You had to live you know. So we found a way to live again.

Jack also leaned on the support of friends, family and church to help him deal with the loss.

Yeah, we just kind of…just let it out, let it out. We kind of accepted it…you know, then and there, but we knew that you know we go to church and we believe that, you know, that he went on to a better place…Uhmm, I just, uh, I didn't really, you know it was just something, you know…you're the man of the house now. It was just kind of something

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that just took naturally. I think we've kind of, we don't dwell on what

happened. So I think you know, we know it's happened, and we were sad

then, and we still, when we get to thinking about him we'll get sad, or

whatever, but you know we don't...we don't dwell on that. We accept it,

what's happened and just you know...go on.

Strength and Comfort Remembering the Spirit

Paul found comfort and was able to get his life back on track after a series of

disappointments after he returned to his father's home and began living with his paternal

grandmother and other member's of his father's family.

Well like I say, after my mother and me was, you know drifted apart, I

come back here, which is where my father grew up and all. And, it was

for my senior year and I think that I was just kind of, kind of trying to get

back in touch, you know with him. Plus you know all his family around

too (laughs). Yeah I really do. I could sit, and my grandma would bring

up things that he had done or said in the past you know, or something like

that. I felt like a...I uhh...I felt a lot better just being here.

Jane particularly appreciated her father's wisdom and counsel in times of need.

She recalled a time she encountered racism at school when one young boy in particular

made racial comments that she didn't understand. She remembered not being hurt by the

words because she didn't understand their meaning. She asked her dad after she arrived

home and he gave her advice that allowed her to "bounce off" the comments and go on

with her life without hurt or bitterness. After his death, she stated that his counsel was

something that she really missed.

I still wish he was here. But, it wasn't meant to be... I guess after I got

over the anger, and realized I was going to have to accept it that my dad

was gone, I reverted back to the way I'd been raised... yeah I think I'm

strong, I think I can probably handle just about anything, hope I'm never

put to that test, but I think I can.

Todd, who lost his father and then his older brother a few years later to a sudden illness,

conveyed similar yet different sentiments about how he deals with death.

See when my brother died I had to go tell XXX, who was in school, and

then I had to go tell his other brother who was in school. And like I said,

you know, that is, that was, that I wanted to be. It is strange I know, but

that is how I wanted to be. I don't know like I said, I liked that strength. I

don't know, I don't how to describe it. You need someone who is not

crying, or you know, I don't know, maybe...me I need that. I don't know.

I need to see someone who has got it together. It helped me you know.

And so I tried to be strong you know. My dad's funeral, you know, I think

that I cried through the whole thing, and then like I say, my brother died

about almost 5 years later, I didn't cry a bit. It was just more, like I say, I

don't know I attribute it more back to my mother, because of that one

thing there. You know, you just need to be there for other people maybe.

I think that it makes you kind of more...harder...or whatever...later in life

toward death. I mean, uhh, some people you know...my wife she has

been very emotional about death, very emotional. I mean it is a fact that

my brother died also so I am just kind of...I mean I guess calloused up to

the fact...I think it is reality now...uhh, you know it can come at any time...and, and ...that is the only thing that I have got to compare it to is my wife, because I'm, I guess you could say I am the extreme male because...I understand you know death's there, I am not going to *crrrryyyyyy*. I am not going to jump off the deep end or ...my wife lost her best friend a couple of years ago. I mean it about killed her. You know that's the only death she has ever seen in her life.

Joe, who tells of a tumultuous relationship with his father before he died remembered the day that he was notified of his father's death and how he handled the flood of emotions that ensued over the next few days.

Well...mom called that morning about 6:30, 6 o'clock, when he passed away and told me that he was gone. And we got up, and you know, some friends of mine had stayed all night, I think they had, that was when -------
---- was living with us...remember --------? The Indian artist? You know,
...he was living with us...you know I would get alright then I would go back in the room, you know...I would just kind of break down a little bit you know...and you just kind of got to get it out of your system you know. And uh, as time went on, you know, time heals. But every two or three years, you know... I still, well you know I still go out to the cemetery. To you know, to just look and to think, stuff like that.

Jake became overwhelmed with emotion during the interview when he recalled his mother's death. He stated that he doesn't like to talk about it, even 21 years after her

death. Yet, he has stated during the interview on more than one occasion how his mother would insist that he continue with his life and be happy to best of his ability.

> ...it was very hard and even today, you know, uh, like uh Memorial day, we will go out there and you know, and you know I will go out there with my dad, and sometimes, and, other times I'd just...I just go out by myself. (voice cracks). You know, and take my daughter, you know...because she knows all about it you know...you know I talk to her about it. And we will just sit out there you know, an hour, you know sometimes an hour and a half. And just sit there you know, and then...then we will get up and we will leave. But then you know other times I might just go out there you know, anytime, and you know just go out there and just sit out there for a few minutes and ...then go on with my life. (voice cracks...long pause).

Later in the interview he returns to a similar thought:

> I am sure that ... I don't know...in what way...I would think that uh....I...well she was always uhh...you know wanting you to get the most out of life you know...I think that if she was still around, I think that I would ...I think that I would...I would have went on through on school. And I think I would have been doing something else with my life, you know, than where I am right now. I have got a good job right now, I am happy with it, but you know, I there is lots of things that I would a lot rather be doing boy, I, that is pretty tough, you know, but uhh...yeah she would have inspired me so, or she has, you know but...I don't know what she would have done...she would have been there. She would have just

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helped me get through...get through life you know. And just...and just get you there to do...to be all that you can be...just get out there and do it. And let you know that you can do anything that you set your mind to doing. You know that is where I am today, if I set my mind that I am going to go do something then, I can do it, but it is just ...just jumping in there and doing it, the...through all the hurt and tears you know, and everything you just ...you just bear down and just take it. Where some people would say just take it the best that you can, and life goes on. (Laughs). When I guess...just knowing what my mom wanted...I know what she would say...go ahead and go with life...and uhh...and to go do something that you want to do and be the best that you can be at it. And just enjoy life. Live life while you got it, you know? Live it to the fullest.

Despite the loss of a parent at such a critical time in each of their lives, the participants talked about continuing their own lives, but in a sense mindful of their responsibility to the deceased parent, the other living members of the family, and the society as a whole. They discussed personal ways of remembering the deceased parent, of including them in their lives even into adulthood. Some participants returned to the cemetery to think, meditate and pray. Others talked to the parent, heard her or him in their dreams, or "felt" his or her presence in the form of a guiding spirit. Regardless of the individual methods, each of the participants embodied the resilient spirit of their ancestors, going on with the success of their own lives, even in the face of great adversity.

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to examine the grieving experiences of individuals

from a Native American tribe, the Cherokees. During childhood, these individuals lost a

parent to death. This chapter will address the research questions in terms of the thematic

content of the participants' responses using Shapiro's (1996) Social Developmental

Perspective Model of grief. The research questions were:

1.) What are the traditional grieving practices of the tribe? What role do

traditional values play in the grieving process?

2.) Was the person able to seek out adequate social support resources to assist in

the grieving process? What were these resources?

3.) Did the person perceive a sense of misunderstanding from members of the

dominant society in terms of grief response? If so, how did it affect the

person in relation to the personal grief process?

Shapiro (1996) constructed a model for bereavement that accounted for the

differences and the influences of one's culture. These include not only the differences

between the minority culture and the dominant, or Western Euro-American culture, but

also the differences *within* one's own culture. These include, but are not limited to, socio-

economic status, immigration status, acculturation, and education. Though well

researched and well entrenched in the practices of the professions associated with death

and dying (medical, funeral, social work, mental health, etc) existing methodologies and

beliefs about the process of grieving may not generalize well to other cultures.

However, Shapiro recognizes common areas of all methodologies that are defined by the existing cultural customs, values and beliefs. They are:

1. Defining the relationship between the dead and the living

2. Describing the nature of life after death

3. Managing the intense emotions of life after death

4. The social reconstruction of social roles and relationships

How a culture "answers" these questions, by word or by deed (ritual, rite, custom) is the actual difference between cultures. The vital task of the person, and the family, who are surviving is two-fold. First, the person must re-create the family and the role within the family without the deceased. How will old tasks now be completed? How will new tasks be completed? Second, the person must incorporate the death into an on going but now changed developmental family process. In other words, from Shapiro's (1996) perspective, grief is "a fundamental expression of our social constructions and social values." This developmental model was used to provide context for the thematic content of the participants' responses in addressing the research questions for the study.

Traditional Values and Practices

For the purpose of this study, traditional values and practices were not strictly defined or outlined, rather they were determined by a subjective view of the participant and of the researcher. Some general characteristics that were considered to be traditional were use of the Native language, preparation/consumption of Native food, attendance at tribal events (social, political, work related, religious), workplace on tribal grounds or for the Cherokee Nation, living on allotment land, and having predominantly Indian friends.

Prior to the interview, each participant was asked if he or she considered himself or herself "traditional." The initial response was without exception "No." This is also true for the 8 or 10 potential participants that were pre-interviewed and determined to be not appropriate for the study due to age at time of death of parent, or other factors. After other follow-up questions, it was determined that the participants often lived on allotment land, attended an Indian church, spoke the language, and perhaps attended weekly Stomp dances. Further probing led to the participant explaining that their ancestors, very often a grandparent, were the "really traditional" ones who strictly followed the customs and rites of the tribe, even to their style of dress. This is consistent with Shapiro's assertion that members of a minority culture, due in part to acculturation but also to other factors as well, tend to downplay the level of adherence they hold to traditional values. It also is consistent with the loss of traditional values over time that many Native American tribes are experiencing (Choney, Berryhill-Paapke, & Robbins, 1995; Duran & Duran, 1995)

The participants explained how the knowledge of the customs had been passed along, but how they no longer followed them as their ancestors had done. It was as if they stated they were traditional in their actions and beliefs, they would be disrespecting the honor, or the memory, of their ancestors. This response was consistent across the participants, regardless of age. Older participants were as likely to give that credit to their grandparents, as were the youngest participants who could easily be the grandchildren of the oldest. Therefore, it appears that this is as much a sign of respect to elders as it might be a true evaluation of one's own level of traditionality.

However, with that stated, it should be noted that customs and traditions of the Native American, across tribes, are being followed to a lesser extent by the younger

generations due to acculturation (Shapiro, 1996). For example, even "traditional" Native Americans rarely wear the traditional dress of their forefathers, nor do they live in communal makeshift homes, or cook their meals outside. Many Native Americans work in factories, live in single-family homes, and attend Christian churches. In this study, it appeared that all the participants had experienced a high degree of acculturation while clinging to some traditional ways. This is not an uncommon experience for the Native American person (Olson & Wilson, 1984).

One participant felt pride that the Cherokees were one of the more acculturated Native American tribes, claiming that the Cherokees, despite adversity, had been the "first" to do many things. Another participant, however, worried that acculturation, and becoming, in his words, more "modernized" was not good for the tribe, nor its members. The debate over to "modernize" or not, is a significant issue for minority group members (Olson & Wilson, 1984).

As one older participant put it, she learned when to "be Indian" and when to not let that part of her show in order to be as successful as she wanted to be in the larger society. She also practiced Christianity and her Native religion, merging them so they could co-exist in her life and spirit. When her mother died, her family practiced both the traditional way of grieving by burning herbs, having visions, rituals, and the more modern way by burying her in a casket, praying, and having a church funeral. Though she remembers using many of the customs when her mother died, she stated the family used fewer after the death of her grandmother several years later, and very few after the death of her husband (who also was full blood Cherokee) 10 years ago. So even in this highly traditional family the use of traditional rites was lessening.

The younger participants in the study were less likely to have used, or remember using, traditional grieving practices following the death of their parent. Some remembered other members of the family following the customs, but not the family as a whole. This was due, in part, to the interracial nature of many of the marriages. Either the parent who had died was not Cherokee, or the surviving parent was non-Indian and was not aware or knowledgeable of the customs.

The grief process for those who used the traditional practices appeared to be less complicated. There could be several reasons for this observation. For one, the older participants, who were more likely to have used the practices, have had longer to grieve the death and have had more life experiences, likely including subsequent deaths of other family and friends.

However, these participants recall feeling comforted by the rituals at the time, and recall being able to continue with their lives more readily. This often allowed them to gain success at school, and then later in their lives, at work. They did not remember the parent in a predominantly "loss" or painful kind of way, rather they were able to tell stories about the life of the parent and remember good and bad times that they had shared. The participants appeared more able to accomplish the vital tasks outlined by Shapiro. First, they were able to reconstruct the family without the deceased member, including their own role in the family and social unit. This was aided by having a prescription for "what to do" in the time of crisis when emotions were at their strongest immediately following the death. By following the rituals, the child was not left to feel "adrift" but rather had an almost scripted "role" to play during this time. Second, after the child had had time to adjust to the death, and had felt the support of family and

community, he or she was better equipped to place the dead parent into the now-changed family structure. Traditional beliefs allowed the child to have visions of the parent, hear the parent banging on the wall, or see the parent in their dreams without fear of rejection or condemnation. This allowed the child ample time to adjust to the loss of the parent.

Those in this study who did not remember, or did not use traditional practices, appeared to have had a more difficult, or complicated grief process. They reported feeling more isolated and alone, had more difficulty in school, and recalled the parent in a painful way as they remembered them. Several of the participants stated that they had not done with their lives what they would have hoped, such as in terms of marriage or work, and that they believe that it would have been different if their parent had remained alive.

These participants reported that they were unable to find their role, or understand or predict the roles of other family members after the death. In two cases, the family completed disseminated after the death, leaving the child with little sense of security or foundation. The lack of prescribed rituals left the child feeling helpless and at time hopeless, which seems to have continued into their adult years.

Traditional practices appeared to play a role in helping the person transition from life with the parent to life without the parent. More modern views of grief and of the grieving process suggest that the person should experience the bereavement time, usually intense and brief (6 months or less), and then recognize that the person is "gone" and "move on." In Western ideology, to continue to have a relationship with the deceased, talk to them or "see" them, is a sign of not being able to let go, and generally viewed in a pathological way. This would generally be considered clear signs of a complicated grief.

More traditional practices allowed a longer time period for grieving and do not dictate that the dead person no longer be an "active" member of the family. The spirit of the person is still part of the family dynamic and therefore remains active, though not in body. This more fluid transition may be helpful to the Indian child who has lost a parent. Accepting the finality of anything can be difficult for a child, but particularly the finality of death. Therefore, by not suggesting that the child accept that the parent is "gone," it may help them accept the meaning of the death for them on their own timetable (Shapiro, 1996).

Social and Family Support

The participants in this study were generally able to seek out and take advantage of adequate social support to assist them in their grieving processes. This social support included family and close family friends, as well as the larger community. Social support was most often cited by the participants as being the "thing" that helped them get through this difficult time in their lives. Most participants were able to identify one or two individuals that were especially helpful in the process. These individuals allowed the person to talk on their time, with little pressure or questioning. Emphasis was less on the "feelings" of the person and more on the life of the deceased. The participants stated that feeling "distracted" during this time by going fishing, going on walks or drives, or just going to get a coke or shoot baskets was the most helpful, rather than talking about how they felt.

The one notable exception to social support was the school setting. Several of the participants, particularly the younger participants, but not limited to them, related that they felt the most alone and isolated and the most uncomfortable when they returned to

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school following the death of their parent. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The Cherokee tradition following the death of a person is for members of the community to come together and provide assistance to the family, helping them to get through the next few days. This is done, perhaps, to provide the distraction that so many of the participants claimed to be useful in their experience. Shapiro refers to this time as "transitioning" from life with the family member as a physical presence to life without the member as a physical presence. During these 3 to 7 days, the community members bring large amounts of food, both to be consumed at the time and some to be stored and used by the family later. The friends and family also will complete chores around the home, perhaps painting the house, cutting wood, mowing the lawn, fixing a broken car, or whatever the family of the deceased needs.

In the upcoming days and weeks following the wake, the family of the deceased will not participate in any tribal event or gathering for a period of time after the death. They will likely attend the event, but will remain on the outer fringe, watching though not joining in. This is understood in the community. This may last for 6 months up to a year, at which time the family members will rejoin the events in a more active way. By attending but not joining in, the family members remain connected to the community, even if in a peripheral way, yet are able to respect the loss of the loved one.

The burial ritual, by tradition, lasts 3 days, ending with a large celebratory feast when the life of the deceased is remembered and celebrated. The tone of the feast is in general upbeat and festive. In contrast to the Western view of death which is more sad and fearful, and to be avoided when possible, the Cherokee view of death is more of a

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natural process. Death is viewed not as something to be feared or avoided, but as one more step of the life process. Of course, the surviving family and friends express and feel sadness that they can no longer be with the person in body, but do not feel that the spirit or the influence of the person is gone. Many of the participants referred to the dead parent as exhibiting great influence over their lives. One participant believed that her father had kept her from "trouble" as he watched over her. Another participant recalls his father's work ethic and uses it as a motivation to be successful and to keep going with a good attitude even when he feels down.

The spirit of the person is believed to remain on the Earth for 3 days until it passes on to its final resting place. The spirit is fluid and can return to be seen, be heard, or exist in dreams to convey messages or directions. Only those open to these experiences will be given the privilege of it. It is not uncommon in the community to speak of seeing the dead or talking to the dead in one's sleep. These messages are considered sacred and are often followed to the letter. This is highly supported in the Cherokee community.

Spirituality and the influence of religion is historically an important part of the Cherokee story, and this remains true today. Each of the participants mentioned religion, usually Christian and Native in combination, in their interviews. One participant easily merged Christian and traditional religious beliefs by talking about prayer and meditation synonymously, and referring to dances as celebrations of the Creator. She maintained a respect for Nature, made by the Creator. She attended an Indian church, Baptist in denomination, which is not uncommon for the geographical area in which she lives. The Baptist missionaries were a strong influence along the Trail of Tears, and at the end of

the Trail or Tears, where her family settled years ago. She states that the church was very helpful to her and her family, and has provided strength through the tribulations of the years.

Other participants also referred to the influence of religion and the comfort they were able to find from its teachings and its members. The participants who attended a predominantly Indian church reported feeling more supported and more comfortable in the setting. Those that attended a mixed, or predominantly White culture church, reported feeling supported, but did not appear to feel as integrated into the church body. This may have been due to the misperceptions of outsiders unfamiliar with the grieving practices of the Cherokee that are distinctly different from that of dominant culture, such as seeing visions or speaking with the dead, which might be interpreted as supernatural, Satanistic, or pathological.

Culture, Grief Response and Understanding of Others

Though there are many, many models for grieving, one nearly universal principle of each of them is the necessity of social support and understanding. When an individual feels that they are grieving alone, or that no one understands their pain, that is when they are more likely to experience a complicated grieving process that might take years, or a lifetime, to resolve (Shapiro, 1996).

As referred to in the earlier section, one notable exception to the support felt by the participants in this study was the school setting. Several of the participants reported feeling uncomfortable and isolated after returning to school. Each of the participants attended school in a predominantly Indian geographical area where it would not be uncommon for 40-60% of the class to be Native American, and likely Cherokee.

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However, the schools were administered and taught by members of the White dominant culture. As a result of feeling isolated, 2 of the participants quit school soon after the death, and 2 others finished, but struggled with attendance and with grades. Others just reported feeling uncomfortable in this setting.

It appeared that the participants felt misunderstood at school. One participant described it as like being "on stage." He felt as though everyone was looking at him. Another participant felt like everyone wanted him to talk about it and he didn't want to do that. One participant felt her teacher ignored her loss and expected her to act as if nothing had changed in her life and that she should continue to act at school, both academically and socially, as if things were normal. These events led to feelings of isolation, rejection and pressure.

Attempting to explain this in terms of Shapiro's model might suggest that the participants were feeling misunderstood by "others." Shapiro (1996) outlines the widely held Western, or dominant culture, grief beliefs that:

1.) Grieving is a personal and private matter

2.) Immediate and open expression (verbal, often) of feelings is a necessary component of grieving

3.) Bereaving has a specific endpoint, the survivors should strive to "let go"

4.) An ongoing relationship with the deceased is pathological

The Cherokee Indian participants in this study reported feeling that the loss was a personal, or private matter, but the 3 day ritual was a community event. Several of the participants reported that hundreds of people came to their house following the death, and that the family was never alone during this time. While the death is personal, it is also

shared with the Cherokee community. A death among their own was not a time when the traditional Cherokee family typically isolated or withdrew into themselves for comfort.

The Cherokee way of grieving according to the participants in this study were more likely to express their grief in non-verbal ways, such as going into nature or meditation. They reported feeling uncomfortable, or pressured, when asked to verbally express their feelings of sadness and/or loss. This may have been a large factor of feeling uncomfortable at school for many of the participants.

It should be noted that this small sample included more males, and therefore may not accurately reflect the female Cherokee experience of grief. The men in the study were more likely to state that their lives would have been different in some way if the death had not occurred. They expressed their anger, disappointment and bitterness about the death. The men endorsed more difficulties, such as at school, with friends, wanting to be alone and drinking. The women talked more about responsibility to the family, feeling sadness, remembering the dead fondly and rituals. No woman in the study stated that her life would be significantly different if the death had not happened. In contrast, one female participant stated that the death had kept her on the right path because she knew her father's spirit was watching her.

The Cherokee way of grieving does not strive to "let go" and feels that an ongoing relationship with the deceased is not only not pathological, but an actual gift, or privilege to be experienced and cherished. The spirit of the deceased remains a part of the family, even if not in body. Participants in this study reported visiting the gravesites, talking to the deceased, and seeking their spirit's counsel.

Cherokee culture is generally considered to be a matriarchal society (Woodward, 1963) where the female role is very active in the family. Often, the female is the decision maker in the household, cares for the children, cooks/cleans, and perhaps most importantly, passes along the traditions of the tribes through stories, discipline and example. Loss of the mother might signify, or be experienced as, the loss of these things. One participant felt like she had lost her caregiver, the person who normally would be caring for her. The participant felt she needed to take on the role of mother to her younger siblings, caring for them. Another participant felt he had lost the link to his Indian heritage. His father was White and knew little of the customs of the Cherokee, so with the death of his mother, died his opportunity to learn more of his Cherokee past.

In conclusion, participants in the study who used traditional grieving practices such as the 3 day wake, or celebration, burning the sage or herbs, and who received strong social support from family, friends, tribal members, and church members seemed to have a healthier grieving experience following the death of their parent. They report feeling more at ease with the loss and with themselves in the years following the death. Those who did not report feeling less comfortable with themselves as adults and report that if the death had not occurred their lives would be significantly different. Most participants were able to access adequate social support either from family or friends. The one exception to this is in the school setting, where several participants reported significant problems after returning to school following the death. Finally, several participants reported feeling misunderstood by those outside the Native American community. They felt most comfortable when surrounded by family and Cherokee, or Native American friends.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE
RESEARCH, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING

Conclusion

This study examined the grieving process for Native American persons of the

Western Band of Cherokee Tribe who had experienced the loss of a parent during their

childhood years. The qualitative analysis sought to answer three main questions. They

examined: (a) the traditional grieving practices of the tribe and their role to the

individual; (b) whether the person was able to seek out adequate social support resources

to assist in the grieving process; and, (c) whether the person perceived a sense of

misunderstanding from members of the dominant society, and if so, how it affected the

person's grief process.

In answer of the research questions, three main themes emerged from the long

interview process. One main theme was the importance of the Native American way of

life. "Being Indian" or specifically Cherokee was an important concept for the

participants. Many mentioned being Indian specifically in the interview, stating that it

brought a sense of structure, of pride, of unity to their lives. Others mentioned it in less

direct ways, referring to traditions or values, or ancestral history as important to them.

Several participants lamented about the loss of traditional ways in the People, including

the language and other tribal customs in addition to grieving customs.

A second theme that emerged was that of the importance of spirituality to the

Cherokee Indians. Every participant referred to spirituality in the interviews. Most

participants described a blending of traditional religious belief with more modern

Christian beliefs. Thoughts, memories, and experiences, past and present, of meditation,

prayer and attending church peppered each interview. Participants also expressed a belief in the spiritual presence of the deceased loved one. Many referred to the deceased as a guiding spirit that still influences their behaviors and thoughts today. Several participants made reference to the spirituality of Nature and the peace and comfort that comes from being in natural surroundings, whether it was walking, hunting, or fishing.

The third theme that emerged from the data was the resilient nature of the Cherokee people. The participants described a responsibility to self, to the deceased loved one, to surviving family members and to society as a whole to continue with their own lives in a full manner. Historically, Cherokee Indians have faced great adversity and experienced tremendous loss, particularly those of the Western Band, relocated in Oklahoma Territory after the Trail of Tears. As their ancestors did before them, the participants seemed to recognize the loss, then gather their strength and resources to continue in a resilient and productive manner. The participants incorporated the dead parent into their lives in terms of spiritual influence and guidance, but they also effectively reconstructed their own lives and growth without the physical presence of the dead person.

The participants in the study were self-identified as traditional Cherokee members. Blood quantum, though a historically significant part of the past, was not asked formally. Generally, the participants mentioned their blood quantum level at some point during the interview, but it was not a criterion for exclusion or inclusion in the study. The participants were aged at least 21 years. The parent's death had occurred when the participant was between the ages of 4 and 18. Therefore, the death of the parent

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was at a minimum three years in the past of the participant. This was done to allow the participant time to grieve and to reflect upon the impact of the loss.

Furman (1974) stated the loss of a parent to death while in childhood was the most profound loss a person could experience in their lifetime. In addition, it can be difficult for members of a minority group when cultural practices are divergent from the dominant culture. This study sought to examine the impact of the combination of the loss of a parent with culturally different grieving practices of the traditional Native American Cherokee Indian tribal member. The purpose of this study was two-fold. First, it has been noted that there is little existing research that focuses upon the grieving process of Native Americans, and specifically that of Cherokee Native Americans. Therefore, it was hoped that this research could add to the research on Native Americans. Second, it was hoped that the study would provide an initial, exploratory look at the experiences of a select number of individuals identifying with the Cherokee Indian tribe and their experience of grief in the loss of a parent.

Though blood quantum was not a criterion for selection, it has been a storied part of the Native American experience. Native Americans are the only minority group mandated by the Federal government to identify themselves using the blood quantum method and to be issued an identification card bearing such information. Many Native Americans remain to this day, offended by such a mandate. However, almost every participant made reference to blood quantum level during the interview. Either they would mention that they were "full-bloods" or in the case of one participant, that they wished that they were full-blood.

In designing the study and evaluating what might make one "traditional," several characteristics were considered as possibilities to be alert for in the interviewing process. Those included eating traditional foods, speaking the language, living on allotment land, having primarily Cherokee friends, attending tribal events, and working with or for the Cherokee Nation. Each of the participants identified with most, if not all, of these examples, and in some cases, even others, but most of them at some point in the interview or the pre-interview stage, stated that they were not "traditional" like they should be, or that their level of knowledge would likely not be enough to be helpful. In each case, this was followed with a comment or a story about a grandparent or a great-grandparent that would have been "perfect" for the study due to their level of knowledge and adherence to the tribal customs. It appeared that the participant, when comparing self to ancestor, felt uncomfortable speaking about his or her own level of knowledge, though others may have judged the knowledge level as significant.

However, it does appear that the usage of historical tribal grieving practices has lessened over the years. The participants older than forty years at the time of the interview were more likely to have used more traditional rituals than younger participants. These older participants that used traditional burial and/or grieving practices usually did so in conjunction with dominant culture burial and/or grieving practices. The older participants, as communicated by their stories, appeared to have more successfully grieved the loss of their parent. While this may have been a function of the number of years that had passed since the death and/or the age and experience of the participant, the participant usually credited the support of the "Indian ways" in helping them through the difficult times. The younger participants that did not report feeling this support often felt

alone, or adrift, and did not appear to as successfully complete the grieving process as a whole as demonstrated by continued feelings of loss, bitterness, depression and isolation.

As a side note, the investigator observed that older and younger participants similarly reported a diminishing use of tribal rituals and ways in their lives and the lives of their families and friends. Though both reported feeling a sense of loss and deprivation due to this fact, the general consensus appeared to be that it was just one more way that their people had learned to adapt and to best get by in the world in which they live. Though they, in varying degrees, mourned the loss of the ways, they believed to best survive, adaptation was necessary.

Limitations

The two primary purposes for this research were to first, add to the general research base for Native Americans and grief; and second, to provide a unique perspective on the experiences of a select number of individuals from the Native American Cherokee Indian tribe who had lost a parent to death while in childhood. The present study is an initial one, exploratory in nature, intended to elucidate information and themes observed from this small sample that might inform follow-up research and other researchers. It is not intended to explain, or detail, how Cherokee Indian people grieve in general. It is certainly not intended to explain or detail how Native American people of the various tribes grieve. Other limitations of this study include the lack of generalizability to all Native American peoples, participant selection, number of participants, the researcher's personal history, and the researcher's bias.

As stated earlier, the study was not intended to provide a detailed theory or description of the grieving practices of Native American peoples. There are over 500

recognized tribes in the United States (Herring, 1992) each having unique rituals and traditions. It would be a disservice to the rich diversity of these peoples to claim that one tradition, or set of traditions, is followed by all. The purpose of the study was to provide a better understanding, an insight, into the experiences of the participants as they grieved as children.

Participant selection was a limitation that may introduce a sampling bias to the study. Initial participants were selected based upon their identification by Cherokee Nation political leaders. Subsequent participants were identified by word of mouth and referrals from family and friends at the tribal complex. The researcher spent several weeks at the tribal complex speaking with individuals in various departments. The researcher also spent time making connections at local gatherings on the advice of a tribal healer. From these referrals, the participant was deemed study-appropriate or study-inappropriate. Those deemed appropriate then either agreed or disagreed to participate. The final selected sample included more males than females, as well as a wide variety of ages, socioeconomic status, life experience and personal histories.

The final selected sample was likely a fair representation of the Cherokee population living in the Tahlequah vicinity in terms of traditionality, values and beliefs, and lifestyle. The sample was divergent in terms of SES, age, acculturation, experience, and education. The selected sample's participants may have collectively had an education level (most had at least some college) higher than the average person in this area, it should be noted that Northeastern State University is located in Tahlequah. The enrolled student body is predominantly Native American. There are many financial incentives, such as scholarships, grants and awards available to Native American students from the

government, the university, and the tribe, therefore the selected sample may be a more accurate representation of the area than it might first appear. Despite these demographic differences, the participants discussed similar grieving experiences and rituals, both past and present. Given this representation of the Cherokee people in the local area, the results of the study may generalize fairly well to other members of the tribe also living in the general Tahlequah area.

While it is likely that this sample group provides a fairly good indication of Cherokee Indian people living in the area of the tribal complex and on or near allotment lands, it is unknown how well they would represent Cherokee Indian people living in distant geographic areas where there is less tribal support and where there are fewer numbers of Cherokee people. In addition, the final selected sample should not be considered representative of Native American people in general for reasons listed previously.

In this sample of Cherokee Indian people, the children lost their parent to death. However, there are many other forms of "loss" that a person could experience, such as divorce, geographical separation, abandonment or serious illness or injury. Also, a child who did not feel "attached" to the deceased parent for a variety of reasons, such as separation, personality or abuse issues would likely experience grief in a dissimilar manner. The grief response for individuals experiencing a different type of loss may not be similar to the noted responses of the sample.

The final sample size of 10 Cherokee Indian tribal members is small when compared to studies intended to provide evidence for cause and effect, however the small number is appropriate for a study of this nature intended to provide initial qualitative

information about selected cases. McCracken (1988) and Patton (1980) suggest that a sample size for this type of study be between six to eight participants. The number of participants in this study is generally close to that number, and is the number originally proposed for the study. Finally, the sample size is small due to the availability of participants identifying as traditionally minded Cherokee Indians who lost a parent to death while in childhood, which is a rather narrow focus.

The researcher's personal history likely played a role in the study, contributing to researcher bias. The researcher is a member of the Native American tribe in this study, and was raised near the tribal complex. At the time of completion of this study, members of her family lived on the family's allotment land near the complex. The researcher has a long involvement with the tribe and tribal members. In an effort to offset this potential for bias, the use of a second reader analyzing the transcripted data for thematic content was used.

In addition, the researcher's grandfather died when her father was eight years old, in her belief impacting his adult life. The researcher's father's mother, her grandmother, also experienced the loss of a parent, her father, when she was six years old. Both of these parents, in different generations, were in their mid-thirties when they died. Though the researcher did not experience the death of a parent while in her childhood, she believes that the deaths of the previous generations of parents did impact her family's dynamic. For example, her father did not marry until his mid-thirties and waited until his late thirties to have children. This personal and emotional involvement in the subject matter may have been a source of bias as the researcher designed the study (e.g. questions asked), interviewed the participants (e.g. follow-up questions asked, direction of

interview, tone of interview), and analyzed the data (e.g. interpretation of data, tone of participant). In order to minimize this potential for bias, the researcher sought consultation on question formation, employed a second reader, and journaled her own personal thoughts and feelings during the process in order to maximize awareness of her personal involvement in the process.

After the acceptance of the proposal for this study, the researcher, also in her mid-thirties, was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. As the mother of a young child, the impact upon the researcher given the familial pattern was undeniable. To avoid what might be an obvious impact of bias, the researcher delayed the progress of the study for over six months to allow time to adjust to the illness and to recover physically and emotionally. A personal journal was recorded during the six months and during the progress of the study to chronicle emotions, attitudes, fears, hopes, and inspirations along the journey.

The researcher experienced the intended, or previously known, connection to the participants, in that she is a member of the tribe familiar with many of the customs, rituals, and traditions, and the unintended, or previously unknown, connection to the participants in that she dealt with a grief issue during the course of the study. It is possible that an interviewer without these connections may have probed in a different manner, or even in a different direction, garnering potentially richer information, or perhaps just different information. It is also possible these connections, both anticipated and unanticipated, affected the interview process by providing the researcher with unique experience(s) that allowed her to probe deeper, or along lines that one without the connections would not know to do.

Future Research

Death and dying, and grief, have been studied extensively in psychology, medicine, anthropology, and sociology, as well as other disciplines. Studies have focused on the dying process, terminal illness, impact on the family, impact on children, impact on health professionals, and almost any other angle that one could imagine. There are numerous theories and models for grieving and for dying. However, most of these studies were conducted on dominant culture individuals and assumed to be relevant for people of diverse cultural traditions and values. Quite recently, researchers are becoming aware that this may not always be so.

In conducting the research necessary for this study, it was found that very few papers or experiments focused on minorities in general, and fewer still on Native Americans. Studies that did include Native Americans in the sample, often used measures normed on White Americans and then suggested that the results could be generalized to be inclusive of all Native Americans.

Future research might include development of a measure of grief that would be culturally sensitive to the unique practices among Native American tribal customs, or one that would be specific to particular tribes. Another possibility would be to norm existing inventories on particular tribes, such as the Cherokee. Including a large sample size with a diverse geographical representation would be warranted in this endeavor to gain the best representation of the group.

Along the same line and specific to this study, a continuation of the present format using a sample drawn from a more diverse geographical region might provide a more representative look at the Cherokee in future research. Also, the use of an

acculturation measure appropriate to the study might provide more information about the participant's belief system and values concerning their tribal affiliation and fit into the wider community.

Tangentially, a future study might incorporate the various reasons a person might lose a parent in childhood, causing the grief reaction. Such reasons might include, but not be limited to divorce, abandonment, and illness or injury. Also, studying the person who did not feel attached, or close, to the deceased parent due to personality differences, abuse issues, or separation would provide an interesting context for grieving. The study might examine how grieving for these losses might differ, if at all, from grieving the loss of a parent to death.

Finally, a comparison study might be conducted between groups examining the methods and traditions of grieving. These groups could be between Native American tribes, or minority groups, or dominant culture. The focus of the study could be to determine universal grieving practices as well as grieving differences.

Implications for Counseling

The loss of parent has been described as the most profound loss a person can experience in an entire lifetime. The impact is devastating and lifelong, typically even when the person has tremendous family and social support. This is not to imply that the person is unable to recover from the loss, but in fact to the contrary. However, there may be certain things that are more useful to the person than others in overcoming such an important loss. It is these "things" that have important implications for counseling those who have lost a parent to death.

Each of the participants mentioned the usefulness of family support during the difficult days that followed the death. Most helpful appeared to be the surviving parent and siblings. Friends and supporters who did not ask questions or pressure the person to "talk it out" were viewed as helpful, while those that repeatedly asked how the person was doing, or feeling, created more distress. Counselors working with Cherokee Indian children, and perhaps other Native Americans as well, might be advised to allow the process time to evolve, working slowly, and using fewer questions. Allowing the client the time to share on his or her timetable could help establish the trust and the bond necessary to facilitate deeper work over time.

Several participants related the isolation they felt at school following the death of the parent. While this might be what could be described as a more typical grief response by some, it also might be a function of acculturation and "fit" for the individual in the dominant culture. Differences often are accentuated between people during times of stress, and this may be reflected here. Attention to levels of acculturation and fit is an important element when working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, and should be no less so when working with grief issues. It is also evident that a counselor may want to avoid assuming that a particular model, or theory, is a good fit for culturally diverse individuals, when it may not be at all. The existing models, or theories, may provide a frame for counselors, but should not be adhered to even when they do not appear to fit in a particular case. The counselor should remain flexible in this area.

Another important implication for counselors working with Cherokee Indian children or adults who lost a parent to death is the issue of spirituality. The counselor should be become aware of the person's beliefs concerning spirituality and religion.

Often a Cherokee Indian who states he or she is Christian, also will hold traditional Cherokee beliefs about spirits and the after-life. This might include visions of the deceased, preparations for their return to the family home, dreams and dream-states of the deceased, speaking of the person as if they are alive, and other customs. These events and experiences are considered a normal part of not only the grief experience, but of everyday living in the Cherokee culture. Though they may not fit well into the "established" model of grieving, they are normal for this people, and likely should not be labeled in a pathological way. They may not be indicators of a complicated grief process, rather customs of the tribe. A counselor who is aware of the tribal customs and spiritual beliefs, or who is open to hearing about them from the client, will be more effective in working with individual.

In conclusion, the counselor who is knowledgeable and open to working with clients of diverse cultural histories and backgrounds will be more effective. Using existing models and theories as cursory guides, without adhering to them at all costs, is likely the best approach. Working with children or adults of Cherokee heritage who lost a parent to death would require less probing and a patience in terms of allowing time for the therapeutic relationship to develop. An awareness of, or an openness to, spirituality and tribal customs is invaluable. Finally, the counselor that remains mindful of the profound nature of the loss and the acculturative needs of the client in a flexible manner might be the most successful in working with a Native American who lost a parent to death.

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APPENDIX A

Consent Form/Script

This study will focus on the different ways Cherokee Indian people cope with bereavement after losing a parent to death in childhood. Do you, _____, give your permission to be interviewed to gain information about the mourning process that you experienced following the death of your parent?

The interview will last approximately one-two hours and will be tape-recorded. I will ask you questions throughout the interview, but feel free to answer the question in any manner you see fit. At the end of the interview I will ask you some questions about your family background and history as a Cherokee Indian. You may elect to stop the interview at any time. You may also decide to not answer a question. It is possible that you may begin to feel fatigued during the interview, and if so, you may take as many breaks as you need. I will not use your name in the interview or place any identifying information on the tape. After the interview, the interviewer will transcribe the tape in order to facilitate a more organized review of the information. After transcription, the tape recording will be erased. No identifying information will be placed on the transcription. The transcribed forms will remain in the possession of the interviewer.

This study is being conducted to gather information about the traditional ways that influence the grieving process in Cherokee Indian people. It is important that the information be obtained from the voice of the Cherokee people. It is hoped that the research will add to the literature research about Native American people.

Your agreement to take part in this study is of your own free will and is not coerced. You should also understand that you will receive no compensation for your participation. You may refuse to participate, or you may stop your participation at any time during the interview.

Should you have any questions, you may contact the interviewer, Beth Jeffries, at telephone number 405.475.7055, or Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, 305 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078. The telephone number for this office is 405.744.5700.

Today's date is: _____   Time: _____

Signed: _____
                          Participant

I certify that I have personally explained all parts of this consent form to the participant before requesting his/her permission.

Researcher: _____
                          Beth Jeffries, M.A.

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide and Demographic Questions

The interview will begin by asking a few short, demographic questions that will be tape recorded and later transcribed. Each participant will be asked the same questions.

1. What is your gender?

2. What is your age?

3. Are you married or partnered?

4. Do you have children? Grandchildren? How were they raised?

    a. Prior to the death of the parent in your family, with whom did you live? After the death in your family, who took care of you?

5. What languages are spoken in your family? Do any members of your family speak Cherokee? What language was spoken in the home you grew up in?

6. Do you attend tribal events?

7. What is your educational history?

The 10 questions listed are intended as an initial guide. The design of the study is fluid and continuous, therefore information obtained from interviewees may be incorporated in future interviews at the discretion of the interviewer. The questions are intended to elicit information from the participant that may exceed the apparent limits of each question.

8. Can you tell me a little bit about the Cherokee Indian?

9. Traditional ways are important to a people. How have you practiced the Cherokee way?

10. Tell me about the time of your life when your parent died?

11. How have you dealt with this difficult time in your life? Where did you receive comfort or support?

12. Tell me about the traditional Cherokee grieving practices, if any, you may have used.

13.   How have you expressed your grief? Did you ever experience discomfort or shame based upon how other people responded to you?

14.   What effect, if any, did others have on your grieving process?

15.   As you reflect back on that time in your life, and as you reflect on yourself today, how would you describe the effect that event had on you?

16.   What else about this painful time in your life would you like me to know?

17.   What else, if anything, would you like for me to know about your traditional ways?

Probes will be used to elicit such information. Samples of such probes are:

        1. What was that like for you?
        2. How did you feel about that?
        3. What else can you tell me about that?
        4. What did you think about that situation?

APPENDIX C

**Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board**

Protocol Expires: 5/11/01

Date: Monday, May 15, 2000   IRB Application No   ED00265

Proposal Title: LOSING A PARENT TO DEATH IN CHILDHOOD: STORIES OF
ACCULTURATION AND GRIEF

Principal
Investigator(s):

Beth M. Jeffries   Marie L. Miville
2340 Apple Way   401 Willard Hall
Edmond, OK 73013   Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed
and   Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Signature : *[signature]*

                                                                    Monday, May 15, 2000
Carol Olson, Director of University Research Complian   Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications
to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office
MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited
and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

VITA

Beth Marie Jeffries

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: LOSING A PARENT TO DEATH IN CHILDHOOD: STORIES OF
CHEROKEE CULTURE AND GRIEF

Major Field: Applied Behavioral Studies

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Muskogee, Oklahoma, on January 31, 1966, the daughter
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Education: Graduated from Muskogee High School, Muskogee, Oklahoma in
May of 1984; received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business
Administration from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in
1988; received a Master of Arts degree in Experimental and Counseling
Psychology from University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma in
1997. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree
with a major in Applied Behavioral Studies at Oklahoma State University,
Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2001.

Experience: Worked as a practicum student: at Willow View Mental hospital; at
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with adults; and, at the Stillwater Domestic Violence Center. Completed
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