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ADOLESCENT BEREAVEMENT: CONCERN FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine ways school counselors could help students through the bereavement process by eliciting suggestions from adolescents and adults who were adolescents at the time of death of a significant other.

Suggestions were made by eight volunteer survivors to the investigator during a personal interview. A questionnaire was administered to each subject and the interview was audio-recorded to insure accuracy in reporting the data.

The data were described by presenting background information relevant to each subject followed by the actual dialogue of the interview and descriptive conclusions made in light of the general questions to be answered in this study.

Results of this study indicated the following: 1) The death of a significant other had long-range effects. 2) The most helpful person to the mourner was a good listener. 3) Offers of help were more meaningful than expressions of sympathy. 4) Adolescents often avoided facing the death due to their inability to express and handle strong emotions. 5) The death of a significant other often acted as a catalyst for changes in the adolescent's way of life. 6) Adolescents felt the need to express feelings, but often feared criticism. 7) Most adolescents experienced anger and guilt. 8) Adolescents had difficulty in understanding the origins of their feelings. 9) The death of a parent seemed to have a more profound effect than the death of a sibling. 10) Teenagers are less verbal in expressing their feelings than were the adults. 11) Each individual had experiences that were uniquely theirs.

Recommendations made by the investigator were: 1) Counselors must listen carefully, accepting all feelings. 2) Counselors might find it necessary to give information to a bereaved student as to what to expect in the way of changing feelings. 3) The bereaved student may have to be sought out by the counselor as they may be hesitant to approach the counselor on their own. 4) It may be important for the counselor to talk in specifics rather than generalities about concerns. 5) Special attention should be given to the bereaved student and the changes taking place in his or her life. 6) The counselor must be sensitive to seemingly "normal" behavior that might hide underlying problems in dealing with grief. 7) Counselors in the schools need to be overt in letting the grieving student know of their availability. 8) Individual differences should always be kept in mind.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"There is no way the hole left in a child's life by the premature death of a parent can be filled. But we can mourn together for the deaths we have known and such a community of mourning is healing and far preferable to solitary grief" (Gordon and Klass, 1976, p. 9).

Nothing can be more devastating for a young person than to lose a parent or sibling through death. In our complex society of today, it may be even more difficult than in previous generations. Cognitive awareness of death is perhaps greater for youth today. The mass media reminds us daily of death in an off-hand, impersonal fashion. War, terrorists activities, assassinations, and murder are constantly reported via radio, television, and newspapers. The television and motion picture industries have made a profitable business of portraying the death of many people through the popular disaster films and the death of the "bad guy" in movies concerning policemen and private detectives.

However, today's youth may have little first-hand, realistic experience with death. In previous generations many children experienced death early in their lives when a parent, grandparent, or sibling who was ill died in the home. Often the body was kept in the home after death and visited by relatives who mourned together there. Today when a person becomes extremely ill, he or she is taken to the hospital and

removed from the family. The young person has little opportunity to see someone in declining health. When a person dies, the death occurs at the hospital and the body is immediately taken to the mortuary. For the young person the death of the loved one has been removed from the home environment and may become no more real than the deaths viewed on television. Only when the loneliness, isolation, and confusion set in does the young person realize the enormity of the situation.

Krupp (1972) stated that other factors in our society may make the loss of a loved one more difficult for the adolescent. Previously families in our country were often extended families with the household being composed of parents, children, and grandparents with aunts, uncles, and cousins living nearby. If a young person during those times lost a person who was significant in his or her life, there were others who could be readily substituted for the deceased and help make the loss more bearable. Today the mobility of the family has resulted in the emergence of the nuclear family consisting only of parents and their children. The loss of a parent or sibling in the nuclear family may be more devastating. There may be no grandparents or other relatives who can offer support, sympathy, strength, or substitution for the bereaved.

The worth and value of the individual has become stressed in our society in the last two decades and we have begun to realize that the death of any individual is the loss of someone beautiful, precious and unique. All of these factors can make the death of a family member a

more difficult and complex situation for young people to handle today and as a result is of concern to school counselors.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine ways school counselors could help students through the bereavement process by eliciting suggestions from adolescents and adults who were adolescents at the time of death of a significant other.

Application to Educational Theory

"All of us who share in the lives of children must share our tears as well as our joys with them--openly and without restraint" (Agree and Ackerman, 1972, p. 16).

Death is a reality of life that teachers and counselors cannot avoid when working with young people. When students lose parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, or classmates the school cannot help but be affected in some way. Bereaved young people may become depressed and anxious and unable to concentrate on school (Moller, 1967). Not only should the school be concerned with the student's initial response to a death, but Krupp (1972) contended that "unresolved reaction to loss has a deep influence upon the personality and that it may reveal itself in damage later--in poor choice of mate, in marital discord, in the behavior problems of children and in irrational behavior of parents" (p. 425).

How exactly can public school personnel go about helping their students resolve their grief? In particular, what can be done for the adolescent? Dr. Kubler-Ross (1969) said that "with an adolescent, however, things are not much different than with an adult" (p. 158). On the other hand, Berg (1973) cited a study by Alexander and Alderstein published in 1958 that "death has greater emotional significance for children with less stable ego self-pictures than for children with adequate self concepts" (p. 30). Adolescence is a time when the self concept is often in a period of flux and confusion and as a result a death can have very far-reaching effects for the teen-ager.

These considerations were brought to the mind of the investigator during her experience as a classroom teacher when students experienced the death of parents, siblings, and classmates. Such times were characterized by struggling, uncomfortable attempts on the part of teachers and fellow students to maintain normalcy and to avoid any mention of the death. It became apparent to the investigator that a need for honesty and the sharing of grief was needed, but the method of approaching the bereaved student was a mystery and an extremely difficult task. This writer attempted to discover ways counselors can help the bereaved student by considering suggestions of people who actually lost a loved one during their adolescence. Such information can be valuable to all educators concerned with the total welfare of their students.

General Questions to be Answered

The questions answered by this study were:

- 1) Who was most helpful at the time of death of the significant other?
- 2) What did they do that was helpful?
- 3) What kind of difficulties does the survivor feel he or she faced today as a result of this death?
- 4) What does the survivor wish someone would have done at that time for him or her that wasn't done?
- 5) What was the adolescent's role in the family during this time of grief?
- 6) To what extent did the survivor experience Kubler-Ross' five stages of grief?
- 7) What can school counselors do to help students through the bereavement process?

General Procedures

The problem of this study was investigated by interviewing volunteer survivors, adolescents and adults, who had lost a significant other to death during their adolescence. A questionnaire was used as a basis for the interviews and all interviews were audio-taped to insure accuracy. The questionnaire was delivered with a humanistic, client-centered approach to allow the interviewer to gain an understanding of the survivor's emotions and needs during the time. Maslow suggested "...the

best way of understanding another human being is to get into his Weltanschung and to be able to see the world through his eyes" (1968, p. 14). This approach to interviewing allowed the investigator to understand the survivors' needs more fully.

From the suggestions made by the survivors, inferences were made as to the role school counselors can play in helping students to better cope with a death in their family.

Limitations and/or Delimitations

The limitations and/or delimitations for this study were:

- 1) The data for this study was only available from subjects who were adolescents at the time of death.
- 2) The data for this study was only available from subjects who lost a significant other.
- 3) The subjects were all volunteers.
- 4) The subjects were residents of the communities of Great Falls, Montana; Bozeman, Montana; and Stevensville, Montana during the Fall and Summer of 1977.
- 5) The method of collecting data was by audio-taped interview.

Definition of Terms

Significant Other - Parents, siblings, or other relatives who have made their home with the survivor are considered a significant other.

Adolescent - A child between and including the ages of thirteen and nineteen is considered an adolescent.

Bereavement and Grief - These terms are used synonymously to refer to the suffering experienced at the death of a loved one.

Bereavement Process and Grief Process - The terms are used synonymously in referring to the dynamics experienced by a survivor after the death of a loved one which eventually result in the acceptance of the death. For the purposes of this study, the process is considered to be the five stages of grief as hypothesized by Kubler-Ross (1969): Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance.

Summary

In this chapter, the following aspects of the study were covered: definition of the problem, general questions answered by the study, what contribution this study can make to educational theory and practice, the general procedure followed, the limitations and/or delimitations of this study, and definitions of terms used in this study. In Chapter II some of the literature that deals with the stages of grief, adolescent-specific problems concerning death, and counselor concerns when counseling the bereaved are examined in light of the problem of this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter a review of the related literature is presented regarding the particular way in which adolescents handle the death of a significant other. The grief process, adolescent-specific problems concerning death, and counselor concerns in working with the bereaved are reviewed in an effort to see what school counselors can do to help adolescents work through and understand the process of grief.

The Grief Process

Grief is a process. Grief is dynamic. Grief is normal and natural when a loved one dies. It is important that people in mourning understand their changing feelings as being natural and necessary in order to cope with tragedy. Those "who face their loss and all the feelings that go with it, who learn to accept all the normal stages of grief human beings seem to go through, become stronger and are able to begin to go on living full and satisfying lives" (LeShan, 1976, p. 1). Kubler-Ross (1969) found in her work with the terminally ill and their families that five stages are evident in the process of grief. The stages usually occur in the given order, although it is not uncommon for a stage to be skipped entirely, and for others to be repeated at intervals. The stages as identified by Dr. Kubler-Ross are:

Stage One: Denial

Stage Two: Anger

Stage Three: Bargaining

Stage Four: Depression

Stage Five: Acceptance

Stage One: Denial

Often the immediate, initial reaction to the death of a loved one will manifest itself in the form of shock, acute anxiety or a deep depression according to Jackson (1962). After the first spontaneous reaction the denial stage asserts itself. It takes the form of the bereaved saying, "No, this can't have happened. There's some mistake." The person is filled with disbelief at what has happened and often refuses to consider the truth of the death. Osborne (1958) contended that a numbing effect often occurs during the first stage and that it in itself is a form of denial. He views this numbness as an "emotional inability--for a time--to accept in a realistic way the fact of the death" (p. 2). Both he and LeShan (1976) maintained that often dreams of the dead person help the bereaved accept the loss in a way that is less threatening than the immediate and sudden realization of the death might be. This may be a necessary mechanism in coping for some, but it is still a form of denial.

Stage Two: Anger

The bereaved will next reach the stage at which he or she can now admit that this terrible thing has happened, but now asks, "Why me?"

(Kubler-Ross, 1969). It is common to wish that someone else had died, someone who was less important to the world. Anger can take the form of resentment that is often placed on others. When a parent is lost LeShan (1976) stated that a child may feel angry that the parent has deserted them, or angry at the other parent for not being the one who died instead. She believed these feelings to be natural and passing and that it is important to understand that loving and hating are part of all intimate relationships. Anger is often vented at fate according to Osborne (1958), and Kalish (1969) stated that when the bereaved feel helpless and impotent, anger often results.

Guilt is often a feeling that accompanies the anger stage. The survivors often feel guilty about what they should have done (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Osborne (1958) and LeShan (1976) both suggested that guilt may manifest itself when the survivor was relieved or wished that the person had died. This is particularly true in the case of very sick people. Doyle (1972) contended that much of this can be avoided in the case of the terminally ill if the family can "synchronize" their grieving process with that of the dying person. This way much of the grief process can be completed before the actual death.

Kastenbaum and Aisenberg (1972) asserted that often guilt feelings result when a person does not feel bad or sorrowful about the death and feels as though he or she should. Guilt of this nature can often lead to feelings of anger for being made to feel guilty. A vicious cycle can develop (Kalish, 1969).

Stage Three: Bargaining

Dr. Kubler-Ross (1969) suggested that during this stage the bereaved have learned that anger and denial haven't really solved anything and begin to attempt to ask "nicely" for relief from the reality of death. The person may bargain with God saying, "If you'll bring him back, I'll go to church every Sunday" or "If I could have just one hour with him again, I'll be a good person forever." Again this is natural and common and passing in the process of grief.

Stage Four: Depression

Depression, although present throughout the process seems most acute when the denial, anger, and bargaining have subsided according to Dr. Kubler-Ross (1969). The reality of never being able to see the loved one again has finally hit. The sense of loss is great. Switzer (1970) maintained that this loss of a meaningful relationship is "perceived as a self loss, the disintegration of one's self" (p. 129). It is a reminder of our own mortality and how incomplete our lives will be without the lost person. LeShan (1976) observed that often the bereaved feel that it is dangerous to love. When love is given there is the possibility of losing that love and being hurt again. Also involved in the depression stage is learning to live and adjust to life without the loved one. The funeral is probably over, all the relatives have gone home and now the loneliness begins.

Stage Five: Acceptance

"Never being able to talk about a parent who has died is not a sign that you have gotten over his or her death. It means that there are unhappy feelings interfering with remembering" (LeShan, 1976, p. 43). Acceptance of the death of a significant other is marked by the ability to resume one's life and still remember the lost person in good and bad times with happiness and sadness in the memories. "Learning to reinvest yourself in living when you have lost someone you love is very difficult, but only through doing so can you give some meaning to the person's life," stated Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1975, p. 74) when speaking of death as a final stage of growth.

Summary

The grief process is painful, but beneficial. It is the way people cope with the tragic experience of death. When understood, the grief process can be comforting and feelings need never be denied and hidden. They can be expressed openly, for the griever realizes they are normal and natural even though they come at different times and in different intensities for each individual. Imara (1975) contended that the separation of death is a situation of which we have no control. "However, what is in our control is the quality of the separation experience--making it life-affirming or life-denying" (p. 150).

Adolescent-Specific Problems
Concerning Death

To lose a significant other to death is difficult for people of any age. During adolescence this loss may have more far reaching effects than at any other time in a person's life.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1969, p. 158), however, suggested that although adolescence is a difficult time and the "loss of a parent is often too much for a child to endure," she feels that for an adolescent "... things are not much different than with an adult." Other sources contend that adolescence poses special problems in dealing with death. Kastenbaum (1967) believed that teenagers are intellectually on the same level as adults. They have the ability to think abstractly and critically about the concept of death. Adolescents have the ability to question their childhood teaching about life-after-death. Since they are more conscious of self than the child, death becomes a reminder of their own immortality. As a result, the adolescent has a new set of fears and insecurities that they don't have as a child. Kastenbaum said that the adolescents' lack of experience with death makes it much more difficult for them than for the adult even though they have the same intellectual capabilities.

Teenagers may be more anxious about death than the elderly, according to Bascue and Kreiger (1974), because death is seen as an enemy. Death deprives youth of a future. An important study by Alexander and Alderstein (1958) contended that death has a greater emotional impact

for those with less stable self-pictures than for those with more adequate self-concepts. Adolescence is a time when self concept is in flux--often rocky and unstable. Adolescence is often a period of great emotional upheaval. The death of a significant other during the teenage years may be particularly difficult because of these factors.

The death of a loved one may trigger emotions that are not always directly related to the loss. These emotions may be, in truth, related to some deeper emotional problem that had not come to life previously (Jackson, 1965). The death, a life crisis, may act as a catalyst that brings the adolescent's problems into the foreground. There can be confusion and a mixing of feelings. It may be difficult to separate which emotions are a result of the death and which are the product of another, deeper problem.

Nelson and Peterson (1965) suggested that boys "may have particular difficulty in finding ways to handle grief" (p. 355). Boys are often expected to be strong and unemotional. Girls are allowed to express their feelings more.

Jackson (1965) also believed that teenagers may not feel free to talk to parents openly about death. They may feel more comfortable talking to friends and adults outside their families.

Counselor Concerns in Working
with the Bereaved

"Counselors must first make peace with themselves regarding the prospect of their own death" (Sinick, 1976, p. 123). Many writers, including Getson and Benshoff (1977), Bascue and Kreiger (1974), Bascue (1974), and Hawener and Phillips (1975), supported this premise. All stated that counselors must clarify their own values, beliefs, and resolve their own fears before they can be comfortable in counseling the bereaved. Getson and Benshoff (1977), however, contended that although it is best if the counselor has resolved his or her own fears concerning death it is not a necessity. A counselor can still function effectively as a listener. The counselor should, however, be honest and not hide feelings of fear.

Insel (1976) and Getson and Benshoff (1977) believed that the main goal in counseling the bereaved is to help them accept feelings of sadness, pain, sorrow, and loneliness. If the survivor can accept these feelings, then ultimately the death will be accepted.

Getson and Benshoff (1977) offered many suggestions for counselors engaged in grief counseling. Often it is necessary to actually seek out the survivor to let them know that counseling is available. Counselors must realize that they probably can't make the client feel any better, they must just make themselves readily available. It is important for counselors to express understanding by listening well. It may become necessary to make physical contact to make this understanding clear.

Nelson and Peterson (1975) stated that counselors should eliminate euphemisms when talking with the bereaved. Counselors must be able to model sadness in order to show that that feeling is acceptable. Strength for going on with life should also be modeled by the counselor. The counselor working with the bereaved must not impose religious beliefs on the client.

According to Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1969), it is "cruel and inappropriate to speak of the love of God" (p. 156) at the time of death. The bereaved are often angry and may become angry at God. This may result in guilt feelings for having become angry at God. Dr. Kubler-Ross also suggests that the bereaved may need someone to talk to most after the funeral--after all the relatives have left. At this time the survivor may feel most alone, empty, and in need of a good listener.

Ryerson (1977) supported the idea that mourners should be allowed to reminisce about good and bad times with the deceased. Feelings of guilt need to be explored. Anger can be alleviated by strenuous physical activity. The counselor could conceivably allow the client to pound clay. Counselors can also organize groups for the bereaved where role-playing, discussion, and discussion of books dealing with death might be helpful. The counselor can also serve as a resource person for parents and teachers by offering suggestions on dealing with bereaved children and students.

Jones (1977) suggested that school counselors must be very alert to the behavior of the student suffering a loss to death. He contended

that a child may demonstrate apparently normal behavior, but could possibly be very confused and mixed-up inside. Students who might not be able to be articulate their grief may reveal feelings in unusual body language. Jones cautioned that there may also be very severe reactions to grief. A child may fail to demonstrate any grief. Delinquency may develop such as truancy or behavior problems. A grieving adolescent may daydream more and in rare cases he may assume some characteristics of the deceased. An attempt to replace the lost person with a substitute may also indicate that this student needs help in dealing with their loss. Jones also stated that grief counseling requires no special training on the part of the counselor, but that the counselor must feel comfortable in dealing with death.

Sinick (1976) also stressed the importance of body language and non-verbal cues that can give insight into the bereaved person's feelings. Non-verbal cues are also valuable to the counselor in showing the adolescent that the counselor cares. Counselors are reminded that compassion and objectivity are essential in grief counseling, but counselors who find it easy to be very compassionate, may have difficulty in remaining objective. Lastly, Sinick stressed the importance of remembering that no two individuals are the same and these differences are important.

Insel (1976) suggested that counselors should be alert to mourners who have few supporting relationships and that intervention might be necessary in those cases. Jackson (1965) believed counselors should give information that "dispels the unknown" (p. 60) as people tend to

fear that which they don't understand. Berg (1973) contended that the counselor may need techniques other than words. Art may be an area that could offer some help in expressing feelings of grief.

People often deny their feelings during the grief process and often only express those feelings that are socially acceptable. Bascue and Kreiger (1974) said that bereaved individuals must be allowed to express those unacceptable feelings by the counselor.

Counselors can also help their grieving clients by making them aware of the physical and psychological problems they might expect during their grief. Their feelings and actions might not remain such a mystery and some confusion can be avoided (Larson, 1973).

Bascue (1974) believed that counselor education must allow counselors the opportunity to explore their feelings about death, to become more sensitive to the topic of death, and supply practicum experiences in counseling the bereaved.

Perhaps a greater service can be done for students if educators and counselors could help them deal with death before they are actually faced with it. Nelson and Peterson (1975) supported preventative programs that may help students explore their feelings concerning death.

Summary

Chapter II consisted of a review of the related literature concerning the grief process, adolescent-specific problems concerning death,

and counselor concerns in working with the bereaved. Chapter III examines the procedures following in this study.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

The problem of this study was to determine ways school counselors could help students through the bereavement process by eliciting suggestions from adolescents and adults who were adolescents at the time of death of a significant other. The research procedures of this study are presented in this chapter. The population, methods of collecting, organizing, and analyzing data, and precautions taken to insure the accuracy of this study are examined.

Population Description

The population described in this research consisted of a group of volunteer survivors who had lost a significant other by death during their adolescence. The survivors were solicited to contribute to this study through the researcher's contacts in the cities of Bozeman, Great Falls, and Stevensville, Montana. Since the entire population of eight volunteers was interviewed, no sampling procedure was employed.

Method of Collecting Data

Since the prime concern of this investigation was not with specific data, but rather with the attitudes, emotions, and feelings of the survivors at the time of the interview and in the past concerning the death of a loved one, a humanistic, client-centered approach was used when

administering a questionnaire by personal interview. The client-centered training of the researcher aided the researcher in gaining an empathic understanding of the subject's internal frame of reference. Fliess (1942) stated that this empathic understanding can allow the interviewer to "put himself in the latter's place, to step into his shoes, and to obtain in this way inside knowledge that is almost first-hand" (p. 212). The researcher can then gain insight and understanding into the needs of bereaved persons during their grief.

Although a formal questionnaire was devised and administered it was necessary, as Cameron (1963) suggested, "to encourage the free flow of verbalized thought, and emotion, to comment upon something that needs comment, to repeat a fragment that seems promising, and once in a while to make an interpretation" (p. 771) outside the realm of the questionnaire in order to "be with" the subject in regard to his or her feelings, emotions, and attitudes. Rogers (1961) also stressed the need for professionals working in the field of human relationships to not become so mechanical in research that the personal qualities of relationships are forgotten. Truax and Carkhuff (1967) also supported the understanding and insight that is gained from "a direct personal encounter, a meeting on a person-to-person basis" (p. 32).

With these thoughts in mind, the researcher administered the following questionnaire to the survivors by personal interview.

- 1) Who informed you of the death? Do you wish someone else had?

2) How did you feel after the funeral?

3) What was your role in your family during the time of the death?

Did they try to spare you? Did they count on you for strength?

4) Who was most helpful to you during this time? What type of person were they--sympathizer, listener, comforter, etc.?

5) Have you noticed any change in your relationship with others since the death?

6) What kind of difficulties do you feel you are still dealing with today as a result of that death?

7) If you had to go through it all again, what do you wish someone had done for you that wasn't done?

8) Were you aware of your feelings changing in regard to the death, say, from denial to anger to guilt and so on?

9) Were you aware that this person was going to die? If the illness was terminal, do you wish that you had been told?

10) Have you or did you dream about the deceased? What kind of dreams were they and how did you feel about them?

11) Were the teachers, students, or counselors at school helpful? In what ways?

From this questionnaire the following general questions were answered:

1) Who was most helpful at the time of death of the significant other?

- 2) What did they do that was helpful?
- 3) What kind of difficulties does the survivor feel he or she faces today as a result of this death?
- 4) What does the survivor wish someone would have done for him or her that wasn't done?
- 5) What was the adolescent's role in the family during this time of grief?
- 6) To what extent did the survivor experience Kubler-Ross' five stages of grief?
- 7) What can school counselors do to help students through the bereavement process?

Method of Organizing Data

The collected data were organized in such a way that the background of the subject, the actual dialogue of the interview, and the descriptive conclusions made in light of the general questions to be answered are presented concerning each individual.

Analysis of Data

Since this study dealt with descriptive research, no formal hypothesis was presented. The data was analyzed in the form of descriptive conclusions based on the suggestions made by the survivors during the personal interview and in light of the general questions to be answered.

Precautions to Insure Accuracy

An audio-tape recorder was used during each interview in order to free the researcher from note-taking and to insure complete accuracy in reporting the dialogue of the interview.

Summary

Chapter III provided a description of the procedures followed in this study. The population was described. The methods of collecting, organizing, and analyzing the data, and precautions to insure accuracy were examined. In Chapter IV the data is analyzed.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION OF DATA

The procedure for this study was discussed in Chapter III. The data are described in Chapter IV. Background information is given for each subject (survivor) followed by dialogue from the recorded interview. For convenience purposes the researcher's words will be preceded by "Rr" and the subject's (survivor's) words will be preceded by "Ss" when reporting dialogue. Descriptive conclusions made in light of the general questions answered by this study are discussed following the dialogue.

CASSIE

Background

Cassie was twenty-nine at the time of the interview. Her father had been dead for ten years. He died of a brain aneurism following an illness of one week. Cassie had been married twice and had two children from her first marriage. She works as a secretary for a government agency. Cassie had one younger brother and three younger sisters. Her mother never remarried.

Dialogue

Rr: During that week were you aware that he was probably going to die?

Ss: Isn't that funny. I can't really remember what I thought. I can remember going to the hospital all the time. You know, I don't really remember. I do remember thinking...you know this is really weird, because I've never been a religious person. I only went

to church to appease my parents. During that time I started praying. It's just so stupid. But I don't remember thinking he was going to die. For one thing the doctors wouldn't talk to us. Dr. James was the neurologist and he just wouldn't talk. They never told us anything. I don't think we realized how bad he was. Finally when he started getting really bad, I can remember you'd go in...I can remember going in that Thursday night and he was so bad that his mouth was hanging open and his tongue was hanging and at that point I realized. I don't think before I even wanted to think about it. I mean, that's really a horrible thing to have to think about. And they kept saying that if it had kept going on there'd be so much brain damage that he'd be a vegetable, so I imagine it was for the best. I wouldn't have wanted him to have to live like that.

Rr: Who told you that he'd died?

Ss: I was there. They called me. Somebody called me. I don't remember who. It wasn't my mother. It was one of my uncles and for some reason I think it was your dad, but somebody called me about ten Saturday morning and told me "You'd better get up to the hospital if you can behave yourself." I can remember them saying that. Meaning if you can keep from becoming hysterical and they told me I'd better ask Tim if he wanted to come up, too. And I can remember going up there and he was gone. I can remember going outside and having to comfort Uncle John because he was really upset. That was a weird feeling and I can remember thinking, "It's my father and here I am comforting this grown man." It wasn't like it was my dad's brother either, he wasn't. But it was good in a way, it took my mind off it.

Rr: Did you comfort anyone besides Uncle John?

Ss: No. I mean my mother, I never saw her cry. I never saw her shed a tear. I remember we went to Western Union and sent telegrams to the relatives. Other than that I don't remember the little girls reacting at all. I don't remember Tim reacting. I was pretty absorbed in myself. Just Uncle John was the only one I had to console, poor guy. But, he's an emotional person. It was probably just his reaction to the situation.

Rr: Do you think the funeral helped?

Ss: Oh no.

Rr: It hurt?

Ss: Oh, yeah. Do you know Tenny Lund? She's a good friend of our family. Tenny's the kind of person who goes to a funeral no matter whose it is. She was sitting close behind us so she was one of the last people before the family that had to get up and view the casket and she stood up there and went into hysterics. That was really bad. At that point my mom almost let go, but she didn't. I didn't like the funeral. I didn't like any part of it. I don't remember that much about it. I do remember all I did was cry the whole time. I got nothing out of it. Some strange minister stands up there and says some things about a man he didn't know. What do you get out of it? I think if someone that was close to the person who died would say something...I remember my cousin's funeral, his brother said a few words. I think that means something, but the impersonalization of a minister...like Reverend Larson didn't even know my father or our family. I hate funerals. There are a couple of sad songs; somebody says a lot of sad things, and a lot of people cry. And then everyone goes and eats. It's almost pagan its so ridiculous. Like cutting open the pig after he's been barbecued. The funeral did nothing for me.

Rr: Did you feel like your mom was trying to spare you?

Ss: No, my mother is just the kind of person who doesn't show her feelings much. I'll tell you, I remember going with my cousin after my dad had died. I don't remember for sure, I think it was even after the funeral. But she and I had gone for a ride and she dropped me off and I came back to the house. I think my mom was talking to my aunt, they were sitting at the kitchen table. I had something in my hand. It makes me think that I'd been to the library or something. But I can remember taking whatever it was that I had in my hands and throwing it and screaming something about the injustice of the world. My mother was very calm. No, I don't feel like she tried to spare me. However upset she was, she kept to herself.

Rr: By throwing the books you seemed to be showing a lot of anger and bitterness.

Ss: Yeah, I was really angry that this had happened to me.

Rr: Did you ever feel guilty?

Ss: Uh, uh. You mean about him dying? No, because my dad and I were really close. (Crying) It's something that is so hard. Ya know, because when I feel most angry is like when I see my kids and I know that he is never going to see them and it just makes me so mad. And like right now I've got a really nice house and a nice husband, ya know. And he'll never see any of that and it makes me mad. I don't know I guess it's just a selfish reaction is what it is, because there have been a lot better people who have died and a lot worse, but my reaction ...I'll never forget when he first died and I can remember saying this to my brother two or three years ago and he rationalized...I said, "Of all the drunks and bums on skid row why did they have to pick our father?" And he said, "That is being so stupid, Cassie, those drunks and bums have as much right to life as anybody else. You can't say what's bad and take them instead of what you think is good." As far as feeling guilty, no. Dad and I were really close. I can remember when we were kids going to the stock car races when I was in high school. I'll never forget it. Where Bison Ford used to be they had a big engine from a dragster that they had torn apart and you could see the inside of it and he took me down there--not my brother, not anybody else--me. I'm standing there, it was like nine o'clock at night and it was cold and he's standing there telling me how this engine worked. I was never really interested in things like that, but I was interested because he was interested enough to tell me about it so I feigned interest in it to please him. We were really close. When I was going to school in Spokane he used to write me letters every week and that used to freak me out because he never wrote letters to other people. It really meant a lot to me. I got out of school on June 9, came home, they came out and got me and I got a job and worked at that job for a week and he was in the hospital. So probably any growing up I had to do to be an adult I hadn't done yet so I didn't really have time with him when I was older. But I don't feel guilty about it, I feel very angry sometimes.

Rr: Who do you think was most helpful during that time?

Ss: I don't remember anybody being helpful. I can't think of any one person. I can remember that at that time I was going out with Paul Anderson and I can remember him saying to me the very night my dad died, "I'll bet you're glad that's over, you won't have to go to the hospital anymore." I'll never forget that, it was such a cold and callous response to something he knew that really hurt me. I don't remember anybody being helpful.

Like I talked to my mother and stuff, but I kind of felt like my mother didn't want to talk about it and I was worried that I was going to upset her, too, I guess. Whether I would have or not, I don't know. But I don't remember anybody being helpful, Mikie. Maybe if I would have let somebody, but I don't really remember going to anyone to talk to.

Rr: What do you wish somebody had done for you that wasn't done?

Ss: That's really a hard question. I really don't know. I think the best thing people can do at a time like that is to listen with a very closed mouth until they are asked or until the time is quiet when they can offer an opinion. I know that when I'm upset, nothing makes me madder than for someone to inject an opinion that I have not asked for and I'm a very opinionated and verbal person and that is a fault of mine. But in the same respect, that's the way I am. So I think people really need to listen and if you're a good friend you need to listen. What can you say at a time like that? You can't say I know how you feel, because you don't. You can't say it's going to be O.K., because of course, it's going to be O.K. But when? How long is it going to take? Will it ever really be O.K.? So I think the best thing anybody can do is to listen. I'm really a very cynical person. I don't know if it's a result of my dad dying. I can remember that right after all I wanted to do was sit at the cemetery, which I did. I really love contact with his family and I don't know why. That's almost masochistic. I don't see as much of the family as I'd like, but I really enjoy that.

Rr: You feel it's masochistic to enjoy being around his family.

Ss: At first it was almost like searching out to see...I don't know. It's like your father and Uncle Kyle resemble my dad and so when I see them I think, "Oh, God, that's what my dad looked like." It was really hard on me. I like to hear stories about when he was little, I don't think that's masochistic. It's putting resemblances on other people, saying "This is what you look like, Dad," or "This is what you sound like, Dad," and I find myself trying to remember what he sounded like and I can't.

Rr: Is that kind of frightening?

Ss: The masochism I see in myself is me always wanting to see him in other people which is really stupid. I wonder, sometimes, if I stayed at a construction company as long as I did because he was

a carpenter and a contractor. I used to think when people would call for estimates on the kinds of buildings our company didn't handle, that if my dad were alive I could just tell them to call him and that is so, so...not stupid, but so self-defeating. It is an impossibility and yet I thought about that sort of stuff the whole time I worked there.

Rr: What kind of difficulties do you feel you face today as a result of losing your dad at that point in your life?

Ss: I can't really think of any other difficulties than the ones I've already mentioned. I think I'd gone through my adjustment years pretty much. He helped me a lot. He was the one who when I needed shaping up, he's the one who did it, not my mother. He's the only one who could do it. I think that's what's wrong with my sisters and brother today. A woman isn't able to do it with kids, they don't have the authority--women's lib or not. Other than the things I've said about being really resentful of the fact that...oh, I don't know. Just like working on this house, why in the hell can't he be here to help us. (Crying) I don't know, it's just something like...I don't know, Mikie. It's been ten years and if I would talk like this in front of my mother she would probably laugh at me and say, "You've got to be kidding. You can cry about somebody that's been dead ten years?" And he was my father and I love him and I guess it's worse for me because I know he wasn't perfect. But I never heard that man get mad at one of us kids unless we really had it coming. He worked hard. He was never a drunk. He was good to his family. And I hate the fact that I can't have him with me and I'll think all those years that I could maybe have been repaying him for some of the things he did for me. I'll never have the chance. I don't feel guilty about that because I never gave him the kind of trouble the other kids are giving my mom. He was really a good father to me. I don't know, it frankly just pisses me off that he died and I'll always feel that way. I mean, I'm not bitter about it. I am bitter I guess. But I don't go through life hating all young girls who haven't lost their fathers. It's something I'm never going to get used to and I very honestly don't want to because I really cherish his memory. It's really stupid because ten years have gone by and I cannot talk about him any longer than very short periods of time without crying. Like if I was to go for counseling or therapy I should probably look into this. I don't know. I just know that I would give anything if this hadn't happened.

Rr: You'd change this if you could.

Ss: But I can't.

Rr: Cassie, have you ever wondered if your dad's death had anything to do with you marrying Paul Anderson?

Ss: Marrying Paul? Ya know, it's really funny that you should mention that. I told you that he wasn't very helpful and said something that really hurt me right after my dad died, but I often thought...We used to have knock-down-drag-out fights and I considered breaking up with him lots of times, but I always thought if I break up with him the next guy I go with won't have known my father and how will I be able to talk about him and still have that person understand. They won't have known him. I don't know if that had anything to do with my finally marrying Paul. I can remember I often thought that when I couldn't decide whether or not to break up with him. Now I know that that doesn't matter. Doug is more understanding about that than Paul ever was and he didn't know my father. Maybe all that mess with Paul is just too close right now for me to really sit back and think if getting involved with him...how much that had to do with my father's death.

Descriptive Conclusions

The interview with Cassie was an emotional one. Cassie couldn't recall anyone being particularly helpful to her during that time. She felt that, although she talked with her mother to some extent, her mother didn't want to discuss the death and found little comfort from her. Cassie suggested that her mother might be surprised to see her still reacting so emotionally to the death. Cassie felt a great deal of anger at not having her father with her at this time in her life. She expressed regrets about not being able to share her life and her family with him as well as frustration at not being able to do anything for him. Her inability to accept these facts was her greatest difficulty. In relation

to her family, Cassie felt the loss was greater for her, as she had a special closeness with her father and the other children were younger at the time of his death. Cassie would have liked a good listener during this time--one who would not offer unasked for opinions and platitudes. Anger was the most noticeable stage that Cassie exhibited and she still felt a great deal of anger. She did not want the anger to be resolved and admitted wanting to react emotionally when speaking of her father. Cassie suggested that her father's death might have had something to do with her continuing a relationship with Paul that later ended in divorce.

DAN

Background

Dan was fourteen years old at the time of his mother's death. At the time of the interview she had been dead for one year after a six-year battle with cancer. Dan's parents had been divorced since he was four years old and he had lived with his mother. Dan's oldest brother, Denny, had lived with the father and was killed in a car accident one month after Dan's mother had died. Dan's mother requested that following her death, Dan was to live with his oldest sister and her husband. A custody battle resulted between Dan's father and his sister. The court awarded custody of Dan to his sister. Dan also had another older sister and older brother.

Dialogue

Rr: Have you ever talked to anyone about your mom before?

Ss: Huh uh, but that doesn't matter. I don't mind talking about her.

Rr: Can you tell me about the day she died?

Ss: Dinah told me. I just woke up in the morning and Dinah said, "Mom died last night, you don't have to go to school today." So I just went back to bed and laid there and thought about it for awhile.

Rr: What did you think about, Dan?

Ss: I don't know. Just about her, I guess.

Rs: Did you think that she was going to die?

Ss: Yeah, I knew she was going to die. She was real sick, ya know. This last time she went into the hospital she was real bad. I guess I knew then that she would die.

Rr: Did the funeral help you at all, Dan?

Ss: Yeah, it kind of helped me, I guess. It helped to know that my mom had lots of friends...to see all my friends there. But it was still kind of hard and it was real sad.

Rr: Did you feel included in your family or did everyone try to spare you?

Ss: I felt pretty much included, because we were all going through the same thing. It helped to have all of us together.

Rr: Can you think of one person that was most helpful during this time?

Ss: My brother David was pretty good.

Rr: In what way?

Ss: I don't know...to talk about it. I can talk to David real good because he's my brother and I can just talk to him real good.

Rr: And because he knows what it was like?

Ss: Right.

Rr: What kinds of things are hard for you now because your mom died?

Ss: I don't have somebody to talk to as good.

Rr: You and she were pretty close.

Ss: Yeah, just a friend, ya know. We were alone together at home for that last year because David was living in Bozeman with Dinah and Ralph and then in Missoula with my dad. It was hard leaving Great Falls, too.

Rr: Has it been hard coming to live with Dinah and Ralph?

Ss: No, they've been pretty good, you know. It was just leaving all my friends in Great Falls.

Rr: That was hard for you.

Ss: Yeah, we had been friends for a long time...since we were little.

Rr: Dan, if you had to go through it all again, what do you wish someone had done for you that wasn't done?

Ss: All that hassle with the court...having to put up a fight like that. I wouldn't want to go through that again. It was so stupid. They should have just let me make up my own mind. They had to do so much stuff and it took so long. Then they let me do as I wanted anyway.

Rr: Do you ever wish that you'd had someone to talk about it with more?

Ss: I don't like to talk about things that much. I just like to keep them to myself. It's better that way. I don't think I need to talk about it, I can handle it myself.

Rr: Did you ever get angry at what happened to your mom and wonder why it happened to her?

Ss: (Covers his face in his arms and waits a long time to answer)
No.

- Rr: That's all the questions I have, Dan. Is there anything that you feel needs to be said that we haven't talked about?
- Ss: Just that when my mom died it changed my whole life.
- Rr: You didn't think that that might happen when you thought of her dying?
- Ss: No, I thought things would stay the same, but they really changed. It changed my whole personality, I think.
- Rr: How do you see that?
- Ss: Well, I just don't talk to kids anymore that much.
- Rr: You mean to your friends. You're not as close to your friends here in Bozeman as you were to those in Great Falls?
- Ss: Yeah. And Mom helped me through a lot of things. I don't know but it just changed my whole personality.
- Rr: Are you more quiet now, less rowdy?
- Ss: I'm the same that way.
- Rr: Do you think Denny's dying changed your life as much?
- Ss: No, because he wasn't around very much. Denny was a shock, though and I knew Mom was going to die. I guess a lot of changing my personality had to do with moving away from Great Falls. I know lots of people there. I guess that's all I want to say.

Descriptive Conclusions

Dan was not very verbal. He had difficulty in knowing exactly what he feelings were. He felt his brother was most helpful to him because they could talk with each other and had shared the experience. Dan's biggest difficulties were not having his mother to talk to and to help him. He was concerned and surprised that his life had changed so much

after her death. He expressed concern about missing old friends and the changes in his personality that he felt were a result of her death. The changes in his personality manifested themselves in Dan's not being able to relate to his peers as well. The necessity of having to move to another town was of concern to him. Dan regretted the complications of the custody hearing and the long period of time required to settle the case. He felt it was not necessary for him to discuss his mother's death with anyone. Dan denied feeling angry about her death, but seemed to have difficulty in answering and seemed to want to avoid the question. This investigator felt that an insufficient amount of time had passed between the death and the interview to allow Dan to be able to express his feelings openly--or to know exactly what he felt.

KATIE

Background

Katie, twenty-four, was seventeen years old at the time of her brother's death. Her brother, Gary, was killed at the age of twenty-three in a one-car accident. Katie had an older sister, an older brother and two younger sisters. She was single and taught elementary school.

Dialogue

Ss: I'm so much more aware of things now. Then it was sadness and I think I worried more about how it affected Mom and Dad then how it affected me. I loved Gary. It just wasn't as traumatic for me as it was for Mom and Dad. That's all there is to it.

Rr: So a lot of your feelings were wrapped up in what was going on with them at the time.

Ss: Yeah, I mean I thought about it, of course. I cared and I was very sad. You always think "Why?" Why Gary? Why not some bum off the street. You naturally wish it were someone else. I really thought about Mom and I wondered what I could do--what would be best. Is it best to be quiet? Is it best to try and console? I mean, you're only seventeen years old, you're still kind of embarrassed by things and you don't want to go up and put your arm around your Mom and say, "It's O.K., Mom. If you want to go ahead and cry, that's alright." I remember crying when it happened. Then I remember not wanting to cry so Patty and Becky wouldn't be upset. I can remember Don and I wanted to be strong for them. I can remember going up to the rosary. I rode up with my cousin and I knew that we were going up there to see Gary. I remember she asked me if I really wanted to go in and I said that I really wanted to see him. I was very calm and composed and I thought I was alright. I went in and took one look and burst out crying. I didn't expect him to be there. Maybe it was because I was being so good for everyone else that all of a sudden, boom, it just hit me. The only other time I can remember crying a lot was when we went to the cemetery after the funeral. When I saw the hole that the casket went in, it really shook me up. I think that that was just the finality of it all ...of seeing Gary in the casket and then seeing that the casket was going in that hole.

Rr: That it was irreversible.

Ss: Yeah. That was it. But I do think that most of the time I was trying to do what I could for Mom and Dad. I think when I did take the little girls under my wing, I knew that Mom couldn't be there for us as much as she wanted to. Mom never really went to pieces, you never really saw her cry. She's not a real outward person. I really felt kind of an emptiness...a big question mark like, "What is going on here?" My personal reaction was more like how can this happen? How can God do this to us? I was more bitter than I remembered. You can't help but lose your bitterness. What's the use, it turns you all yucky inside. I don't think it hurt any of my brother or sisters as much as it hurt Mom and Dad. I think there is something about a parent losing a child that is...I mean children grow up knowing they are going to lose their parents eventually, but this was such a shock.

Rr: Most parents don't visualize that they'll have to be attending the funeral of one of their children.

Ss: No. I may have been in a state of shock more than I realized. I try to remember things that I did or parts of the funeral, and I can't. I can remember on our way to the cemetery we went by school, it was the first day of school. Kids were sitting out on the lawn laughing and enjoying themselves. I can remember thinking...being so resentful of them having a good time when my brother had just died. That's strange, I hadn't thought about that for a long time. When I went back to school, people who didn't know me...When someone dies people come up to you and say how sorry they are and they gush and they maul. These people who never talked to me would come up and it's almost like you're a celebrity because your brother died. That's a hell of a reason to be a celebrity. I'm sure they did it with good intentions. It's just that words are so useless sometimes. I would rather they just let you know that if there's anything they can do for you to just let them know. If they'll just be there. They convey so much by that. There were three priests who were teaching my religion class. The next day after the funeral, I remember, two of the priests said how sorry they were and the third priest just came up and said, "If I can help you in any way, just let me know."

Rr: Did you ever go to him?

Ss: No. I think because at that time I wasn't open enough to go to anyone about anything. It was more my thinking he doesn't really want to talk about this. Actually it didn't have a real profound effect on me. I didn't dwell on it for months and months. I had some guilt feelings about Gary and I can remember being pretty bratty to him and he'd be bratty to me. That's just part of growing up.

Rr: Did you ever dream about Gary?

Ss: Yeah, I dreamed that he was back. This is a recurring dream I've had. He'll come back and be very upset that I'm surprised he's gone and will insist that he's not dead and never was. All very naturally. It was like I knew that he was suppose to be there, but how was I going to break it to Mom and Dad that he was back? It looked like Gary and it talked like Gary, but I knew it wasn't really him. I suppose if I had to analyze it, a part of me knows he'll never be coming back and a part of me wishes he would so that we could be a complete family again.

Rr: It feels like your family is incomplete.

Ss: Sometimes. I miss him most at Christmas and other times that are traditionally family times.

Rr: Who helped you the most during this time?

Ss: I don't really remember that much about me, not that I was so strong. I was just more concerned with the people around me. I think my friend Carolyn helped me because we were really close at the time. I was able just to let loose with her and cry. She never tried to tell me it was alright, she just let me cry and it helped to know that someone was there. At the funeral I remember my cousin putting her arm around me when we were at the funeral. At that time I just needed someone and she was there. At that time I was really close to her. I was still babysitting her kids. I can't really single out one person except Carolyn. She didn't press me.

Rr: What do you wish someone would have done for you that wasn't done?

Ss: I wish somebody could have taken it all back--someone who could make it alright again. I know, you want to know what someone could have done for me personally, but personally I wasn't all that bad off. I guess not really anything for me, I wish someone could have done something for my mom. I hated to see her like that. She was in a dream world and there was nothing I could do for her, nothing. It just devastated her. I don't want to minimize my loss, but it was worse for her. I used to feel really bad and think, "Katie, why don't you feel as bad as everyone else?" I loved him and I certainly didn't want him to die, but he was Mom's first child. Don't remember my dad that much. I was used to seeing him upset, but when my mom was upset it was something major. I wasn't used to seeing her like that.

Rr: What kind of difficulties do you feel you face today from having lost Gary?

Ss: You know my dad and Gary really clashed. Gary would always try to do something to please him and it would always turn out wrong and Gary would end up getting into trouble. Dad was really hard on him and Gary took the brunt of Dad's anger. Dad experienced a lot of guilt feelings for quite awhile after that. Anyway, back to your question. There is one aspect of my life right now ...my dad doesn't like the guy I'm going with and really gives me a hassle about it. I really believe if Gary were still alive I'd be getting ten times the hassle I'm getting now. I think

that Gary dying helped him mellow out a little. Maybe Gary's death helped him realize you can't constantly berate your kids; you have to let them lead their own lives.

Rr: So you don't think that your Dad has substituted you for Gary in this hassle with your boyfriend?

Ss: I never really thought about it till you just said it. You know Gary and I were alike in so many ways. I don't know, Mikie. Maybe he does, maybe he does. Because he does get so angry about us. I think he has had the hardest time getting along with me and Gary, because I always want to give my opinion and he doesn't want to hear it. Could he be using me as a substitute for Gary? I wonder. No, infact, I don't think so. He doesn't approve of my relationship, but that's his problem. It's taken me three years where I could say that.

Rr: Is there anything that you feel hasn't been said that should?

Ss: I guess I just want to say that I often felt guilty I didn't feel worse about Gary's death. But we just weren't that close. There were too many years difference between us. I guess what just disturbed me so much was seeing my mom, who was usually so easy going and calm be so completely devastated.

Descriptive Conclusions

The most prevailing theme throughout Katie's dialogue was her concern for her parents and her mother in particular. The profound effect on Katie's mother was harder for Katie than losing her brother. A close friend of Katie's proved most helpful by listening and allowing Katie the freedom to talk about it if she chose. The biggest difficulty Katie faced was her father not approving of her relationship with her boyfriend. There was conflict on Katie's part over this point. Katie's father had been critical of Gary. Katie had difficulty deciding if she received less opposition from her father because of his guilt at being hard on

Gary, or if she was, in fact, a substitute and received more criticism than she might have if Gary would not have died. Katie experienced anger at her brother's death. She may have experienced denial when it was such a shock for her to see her brother in the casket. She did not really expect him to be there. Katie also experienced guilt, particularly about not feeling worse than she did. Katie suggested that the people who were most helpful were ones who didn't offer condolences, but offered their time and help.

REBECCA

Background

Rebecca was thirteen when her father died of a heart attack. At the time of the interview, he had been dead for fifteen years. Rebecca had one younger brother. Her mother remarried about a year after the father's death. Rebecca had one step-sister and two step-brothers as a result of that marriage. She was married with no children and was employed as an office manager by a government agency.

Dialogue

Rr: Can you remember your reaction when you heard that your father had died?

Ss: Well, I was kind of instantly in shock. I put my clothes on over my pajamas. I'd been babysitting, and went right home to bed. I don't remember much about that night.

Rr: Did you feel better after the funeral?

Ss: The funeral itself was really hard to go through, but after it was over I think I really felt like I could start again. Like that was the end of a really bad time. I don't think I accepted his death as I would have to at this age. I think that I kind of put it out of my mind. I put it out of my mind and if I met strangers I would act like my dad was still alive. I can remember a particular instance at a church camp that summer two months after he died. Everyone was telling what their parents did and where they lived. I worried. They must have gone through twenty-five people before me and I didn't hear a word they said because I was worried about what I was going to say. When they got to me I just said that my parents lived in Red Lodge and that my dad worked in Yellowstone Park. I think I really let myself believe that. That it really hadn't happened.

Rr: It would have been so difficult to tell them.

Ss: I could do it now, but at that time I was emotionally weak and that's how I protected myself. With it being so recent I think if I would have told them I would have burst out into tears and then there would have been no one close enough to comfort me.

Rr: That would have been embarrassing?

Ss: I think that it would have been embarrassing more than anything. I can see now that it doesn't have to be, but I just felt that I was kind of set apart from everyone because of that.

Rr: Did you feel your mother tried to spare you?

Ss: Yes, I think that all my relatives tried to protect me as best they could. Rather than be around all the adults, I went with the other kids to do something they had planned to keep us occupied. I think that it was good for me to be away from them. I don't think it would have been any better for me to have had to accept it at that age.

Rr: Why not?

Ss: Oh boy, I don't know. When you're that age you kind of live for the moment and you don't think that anything will ever change. The only way I would have been able to face it would have been to cry and I just don't think that that would have been any way to cope. I did enough crying as it was and I think what I needed was for my mind to be directed somewhere else.

Rr: As you look back on it, can you think of one person who was most helpful?

Ss: Probably my grandmother. She and I were always really close and I enjoyed her as much as I did people my own age. She always had interesting things for us to do. And she told me that my dad would have probably died from cancer anyway and that would have been a more miserable death than a sudden death. So, that made me feel a lot better. That made it easier. You know, he worked in the park all week and would come home on weekends and I think that made it easier. I was used to having him gone all week. I could just pretend that he was at work. I did have a funny feeling on weekends because he was supposed to be there and I knew that he wouldn't be there ever again. Still, something inside of me didn't accept it. But going back to my grandmother...I think I would have had a much harder time if I'd lost her at that time than I did losing my Dad. We were so close.

Rr: You weren't that close to your father.

Ss: It seemed like I had to support my father a lot. Help him keep his spirits up and things. My grandmother was more supportive of me, I guess. She was a stronger person in my life.

Rr: You were in school when he died.

Ss: Uh huh. I can remember going to school and the first day back everyone tries to console you. If they had just never mentioned it that would have been fine with me. Naturally that isn't the way things are, so rather than break down like I wanted to I'd usually put my lid up on my desk and look in there until they'd leave.

Rr: It sounds like you were really a private person and didn't share much of yourself with others.

Ss: Yeah, I think I must have been. I did have one close friend and I think she thought it just best to ignore it and we went to the extreme to combat it and be happy. We would giggle a lot and get in trouble in class and I used to think that the teachers would feel sorry for me and not bawl me out. When they did anyway, they made me feel better. I didn't want to be treated differently.

Rr: What kind of difficulties did you face in your life as a result of your dad's death.

Ss: Well, what I saw as difficulties then were actually probably good things to have happened. My mother remarried ten months afterwards and that was hard for me to accept. I hadn't really accepted my father's death and to think that my mom would belong to someone else was really hard. It was probably the best thing that could have happened, but at the time I faced it with great difficulty and caused a few more problems than I should have. But that didn't last too long and I adjusted say, in about nine months and adjusted really well. I thought my mom should be able to continued to let us live in the same house and in the same situation until I left home.

Rr: Did you feel that she was being unfaithful to your father's memory?

Ss: I didn't really feel that she was being unfaithful to my father as I felt she was being unfair to me. The only life I had known was living in town and now she wanted me to move to the ranch. Even though I would be going to the same school I was worried that I wouldn't be able to see my friends every day. But, knowing my dad's personality and my step-dad's personality, I think both my brother and I have benefited and come out ahead having a different father than ours. Ours was very quiet and not as adventurous as our step-dad and its just hard to tell what would have resulted if my dad had lived. I often think my mom would have divorced him and married our step-dad anyway. I guess it was just the initial shock of realizing I was going to have a step-dad. I wasn't going to allow anyone to take the place of my dad and I wasn't going to move from the house. I think I was trying to uphold his end of things. I think I felt that if he was there he wouldn't have wanted it this way and I felt as long as I could hold out I was going to. I was going to keep it the way he would have wanted it.

Rr: A lot of your feelings were out of loyalty to him?

Ss: I think so.

Rr: If you had to go through it all again, what do you wish someone would have done for you that wasn't.

Ss: I think I probably could have used some kind of counseling ...someone explaining about life. I can't really recall what

I thought about life then, but I usually had a pretty rosy outlook on things and then when they didn't go that way I didn't know how to cope. I think if someone could have just told me about life it would have been easier. What to expect when somebody dies. I just kept wishing that this hadn't happened so that I could go on normally instead of getting involved in all these feelings and people that I hadn't had to deal with before.

Rr: If a counselor had been available, could you have talked with them?

Ss: I think so. There was a teacher in the school that I admired, but she didn't really talk to me about it, but somehow she communicated so that I understood that she...and now that I recall, maybe she and I did talk about it. She chose me to be the welcome speaker at graduation which followed less than a month after my dad died. Maybe she thought that would boost my spirits and it did. Maybe I talked to her more than I can remember. She has always stuck in my mind as one of the best teachers that I have ever had.

Rr: Would she have had to approach you?

Ss: At that age, she would have had to come to me. I would have been too shy to go to her.

Rr: We've talked quite a bit about you avoiding the situation. When do you think you finally accepted that fact that he was dead?

Ss: Maybe two years later. I used to count the weeks...what day, what hour, each hour of the day and each day of the week was a real soft spot. I counted that for about a year and after that things other than that must have taken precedence in my life. Every anniversary of every week of every month was hard for me. After that I got attached to step-brothers and a step-sister and a whole new outlook on life. Then the thoughts of not having my dad weren't so hard to bear. After that, if anything I felt guilty for having taken up a new life so easily. I still feel a little guilty when I think that my life might be better because he did die...that my step-father was a better father for me than my real father.

Descriptive Conclusions

Rebecca's method of handling her father's death was to avoid it and pretend that it hadn't happened. She didn't know how to handle her feelings that resulted from the death, so she protected herself by doing her best to ignore it. Rebecca's grandmother was most helpful because she was a comfortable person to be around. She was strong, comforting, and kept Rebecca busy, so she didn't have to think about losing her father.

Rebecca didn't see many difficulties in her life that resulted from her dad's death. Although she rebelled at her mother's remarriage initially, she adjusted quickly and felt she had benefited by the marriage and having had a stepfather. Rebecca felt some guilt about believing that her stepfather might have been a better father for her than her natural father. Rebecca recalled a teacher who was helpful by having the ability to communicate concern, not necessarily in words, and gave Rebecca special attention in order to communicate that concern.

Rebecca felt that she may have benefited from counseling that could have explained more about what to expect from life.

RHIANNE

Background

Rhianne was fourteen years old when her father died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage. She was twenty-two at the time of the interview.

Rhianne had an older brother and an older sister; her mother never remarried. Rhianne was single and taught special education.

Dialogue

Ss: When I found out that he had died, I'd just gotten home from a YMCA dance and I had had kind of an argument with him about going to the dance. He didn't want me to go. I'll never forget as long as I live seeing the ambulance men carry him out of our home in a big plastic bag. Those people were so insensitive. It was a very traumatic experience. My mother was so helpless. I've always felt kind of a resentment toward the ambulance people for the way they handled it. You see, my mom and I were alone at the time, my older brother and sister were married.

Rr: Did the funeral help you?

Ss: Yeah, I think it was real hard. My relatives took it real hard because he was only forty-three and he hadn't been sick. So the funeral was kind of like living his death all over again and it really made me realize that I had lost him and that I wasn't going to see him again, ever. Instead of going to the luncheon after the funeral, all I did was go walking with a friend. We must have walked for an hour and a half and that's when I really opened up. Before that I was really holding it in. You know the first thing I said after the ambulance driver came out of the bedroom shaking his head was, "Mom, who's going to buy our clothes?" Isn't that the funniest thing that that's the first thing I said?

Rr: Almost like your main concern was who was going to take care of you?

Ss: Yeah, it was like he was such a big crutch. As soon as I said it I thought it was such a rude thing to say, that it was a terrible thing to say. I guess I was just shocked and that was the first thing that came to my mind.

Rr: Can you pick out one particular person who was helpful to you?

Ss: Uh huh, she was a really close friend all the way through junior high and high school. We were never apart and do you know, that I don't know where she is today. She was real strong for me.

She kept telling me how wonderful he was and how everyone cared about him. She told me things I wanted and needed to hear at that time. She made me feel I was pretty lucky to have a father like him. I kept saying, "Why did they have to take him?" and "I'm too young and it's not fair."

Rr: Lots of feelings of anger.

Ss: Oh, I was so bitter and hostile for the longest time I kept asking those questions. Instead of getting perturbed with me for keeping on, she just explained it over and over again that that was just the ways things were.

Rr: She showed a lot of patience.

Ss: Uh huh.

Rr: You said that that night you went to a dance that he didn't want you to go to. Have you ever felt guilty about that?

Ss: Yeah, a lot of guilt. I wonder if he didn't know that something was going to happen, because I know he wasn't feeling well. He went to bed early that night and that wasn't like him. I don't remember him putting up a fuss about me going to a show or dance, especially a YMCA dance, he never cared about that. But after it happened I just couldn't understand. I tried to blame myself. I think it would have been ten times easier if it hadn't happened in our home.

Rr: What kind of difficulties do you face today as a result of your dad dying when you were young?

Ss: Well, when I did lose him I was quite spoiled and I usually got pretty much whatever I wanted. Overnight I had to completely change. It wasn't that I had to, I just did. Today I still make my decisions real fast and impulsively. If he'd been there he could be helping me with some of my decisions. I just feel like now it's all up to me and I have to carry the responsibility and make my own decisions.

Rr: It sounds like you just had to grow up faster than you might have if he had lived.

Ss: I did. Fourteen is a crucial age for a kid. You're changing so much you really need both parents there and when in an hour one is taken away from you and you don't understand why, it's really difficult.

Rr: Did you ever find any substitutes for him?

Ss: That's really funny that you should mention that, because, yes I did. I was working at a truck stop this summer and I met this guy who looked like him...resembled him more than anybody I'd ever seen and had a character like him. This man was a lot younger, more my age and I liked him immediately. I really fell for him and I know it wasn't because he was a man and somebody I was attracted to, it was because he was a father-like figure and I knew that from the moment I saw him.

Rr: And that was just this summer.

Ss: Yeah, in all those years before, my friends' fathers were really neat about including me and I guess I kind of related to them.

Rr: What do you wish someone had done for you that wasn't done?

Ss: As far as people helping me, nothing. They couldn't have been nicer. I guess one other thing I feel real bitter about is that we had to call the coroner to come in the middle of the night. He had to check through his billfold and things and he acted like, "Look you got me out of bed and I'm tired." It just really made me mad. He just threw his money on the table and was really insensitive about everything. I hated that man. He was sitting in our home and I had just lost my father and he was acting like he was doing us a favor. That just made me feel terrible and I don't know why that had to be. I guess I just wish that he and the ambulance driver could have been kinder and considered our feelings more.

Rr: Rhianne, is there anything a school counselor might have done for you?

Ss: Yeah, I think there could have been a lot. Most of the teachers just avoided it. I had a lot bottled up inside that I needed to get out and I think I could have really talked to someone that would have allowed me to open up. I was so hostile and I didn't understand. Somebody who would have just listened. I remember I went back to school very shortly after the funeral and went to

the principal's office to get an admit slip. The secretary thought I couldn't hear and she said to the principal, "I can't understand why she's here already." I turned around and gave her the dirtiest look. I felt terrible about it and needed to be with my friends so bad. She had no idea how empty and helpless I felt and that I really needed to be around my friends. It still bothers me to talk about it. It's just something...I guess I still feel pretty resentful when I hear other people put their parents down.

Rr: Did you think you would get this upset talking to me today?

Ss: No, not at all. In fact, I thought I was pretty open about it and didn't think it would bother me a bit. Everyone said time will heal it and it helps, but you just never know...you just never forget about it. You just kind of avoid it sometimes. But, you know, when you least expect it, you're upset again and all kinds of feelings come out about it.

Descriptive Conclusions

Rhianne had a friend who was helpful as a listener and displayed a great deal of patience. Her friends' fathers were also helpful in including her in activities. Rhianne harbored some anger toward people she remembered being cruel and insensitive--the coroner, the ambulance driver, and the secretary at school. She also experienced some guilt concerning an argument with her father the night he died.

Rhianne felt that people at school avoided the subject and that a counselor could have helped her release pent-up emotions. She expressed surprise at still being able to get upset when talking about her father's death.

SHERRY

Background

Sherry was thirteen at the time of her father's death from a heart attack. That was one year and three months before the interview. Sherry had three older brothers and one younger brother. Her mother had not remarried.

Dialogue

Rr: Can you tell me about the day your father died?

Ss: He died at night. He'd been sick that day and my mom and I took him to the hospital. He died that night. The hospital called my mom and since my room was real close to the phone, it woke me up. I could tell something was wrong, so I got up. I was the first one of us kids to know that he had died, till the rest of them woke up in the morning.

Rr: Did the funeral make you feel better?

Ss: Huh uh. His face didn't look like him. When we left the hospital he looked like he normally did and then when we went to the funeral, it didn't look like him. It just didn't look like him and it kind of spoiled it. It's hard to explain.

Rr: Do you think your family tried to spare you?

Ss: I was the first one to know about it, so they couldn't spare me very much. My mom kind of needed me, she needed all of us. My brothers used to fight a lot. After he died, for a little while anyway, they kind of stopped fighting so much.

Rr: Who do you feel helped you the most?

Ss: My sousin, Anna, helped me talk about it and take it off my mind. We'd go around and do things, run around, and go ice skating together to get out of the house.

Rr: You needed to keep busy?

Ss: Yeah, you'd go buggy sitting around the house.

Rr: How is your life more difficult because your dad died?

Ss: Well, we don't have as much money at home, that's been harder. The boys kind of give my mom a hard time and they didn't do that to my dad. And then I get to thinking sometimes...

Rr: What do you think about during those times?

Ss: I think it would be a lot easier to live with my dad alive instead of dead. He loved me a lot, we were pretty close. Maybe my mom and I wouldn't fight so much if he was alive. Maybe she wouldn't have run off and left us this fall. She ran off with a guy to North Carolina. I'd already told you that. My dad wouldn't have let that happen.

Rr: That was a very hard time for you, wasn't it, Sherry.

Ss: Yeah, because I didn't know where she was and I was afraid she wasn't coming back and would have had to take care of the boys by myself.

Rr: That's pretty scary to think of all that responsibility.

Ss: Yeah, especially when they don't listen to me.

Rr: Sherry, what do you wish someone would have done for you that they didn't.

Ss: Quit saying I'm sorry. People always say I'm sorry. That is so weird. They could say, "What can we do for you?" Or something like, "If you want to come and talk about it you can come and see me."

Rr: Would you have gone if someone would have said that?

Ss: Yeah, if it was someone I could trust. Nobody ever really listened to me or they would have laughed that I was so upset.

Rr: They wouldn't have understood.

Ss: Sometimes it doesn't help to talk and at other times you feel like you'll burst if you don't. Sometimes talking makes you feel worse. I sure hope this doesn't happen again.

Rr: What if it does?

Ss: I don't let myself think about it. This has been kind of a hard week for me. My friend's sister was shot and died. It kind of reminds me of my dad.

Rr: When other people die it reminds you of your dad?

Ss: Yeah, and then I feel bad about him all over again.

Descriptive Conclusions

Like Dan, Sherry was not as verbal as the adults the researcher interviewed. Sherry's difficulties centered around relationships in her family. Most significant of those was her mother leaving for a short time without notifying the children. Sherry was very frightened during this time. The loss of her father has meant a loss of stability for their family. Sherry's cousin was helpful to her by doing things with her and helping her keep busy.

Sherry suggested that a good listener would have been helpful if she trusted that person. She was opposed to being told by people that they were sorry and would rather that they had offered help and understanding. Sherry had mixed emotions concerning talking about her father's death. Another death in her environment brought back memories of her own loss.

SETH

Background

Seth was thirteen years old at the time of his father's death thirty years before this interview. His father died after being ill

with stomach cancer for a known period of six weeks. Seth's mother was a teacher who was only home on weekends and holidays. Seth had two older brothers, one of whom was also dead. Seth was a school psychologist.

Dialogue

Ss: He died of stomach cancer between my freshman and sophomore years. That was the summer of 1947. He had been pretty sick before he died.

Rr: You were pretty much prepared for it then.

Ss: I'm not prepared for it yet.

Rr: You mean it's still hard to believe that he died?

Ss: No, I still have something to work through on that yet...that I never worked through before.

Rr: So it's still unresolved for you.

Ss: Yes, it's very much unresolved.

Rr: Was the funeral helpful to you?

Ss: No, it seemed unreal for one thing...with all the preparations and everything and I really couldn't comprehend why. Well, there were a lot of people around.

Rr: But it was just that it was so unreal.

Ss: I never did understand where my mother was with the whole thing. I guess the word is objective.

Rr: Objective?

Ss: Yeah.

Rr: It seemed like she didn't care?

Ss: No, that's just the way she was. I never did understand why my Mom and Dad got married.

Rr: She wasn't very emotional?

Ss: No, I guess that's a good word. I guess that a good word would be emotional.

Rr: Were you emotional about it?

Ss: No, not until...until (difficulty in answering) I couldn't handle it. The finality of it. When he was put in the ground was a bit bad.

Rr: That's what you really had trouble with. Who was most helpful to you during that time, Seth.

Ss: My oldest brother. He was just around. I admired both of them. I had two brothers. They came back when my dad died and took command.

Rr: Did he ever talk to you about it much?

Ss: No.

Rr: What did you do, pretend like it didn't happen?

Ss: No, I knew it had happened because my whole life changed. I mean before that I lived on a farm. We sold the farm and I came out to Montana to live with my brother, and then I'd go back to high school in the fall.

Rr: Who did you live with then?

Ss: By myself. In a hotel. The First Avenue Hotel.

Rr: Were you pretty lonely?

Ss: No, I was basically a loner.

Rr: So the way your brother helped was by taking charge.

Ss: Yeah, he became another dad. He was sixteen years older than me and my other brother was ten years older. I can only remember him living at home when I was really little.

Rr: So you were alone with your dad when he was in declining health. Did he tell you that he had stomach cancer?

Ss: Hum. (difficulty in answering) Yeah, he did.

Rr: Sounds like you were the only one around for him.

Ss: I hadn't thought of that, Mikie. My mom was away at summer school.

Rr: What that a big burden?

Ss: I didn't think so. Hum. I need to work that through.

Rr: What do you mean, "work that through?"

Ss: I've just ignored that. That's one of the things I've repressed. From the time he was buried...I've known it was there, but I've never dwelled on it. Just kind of...

Rr: Just buried it deeper and gone on?

Ss: Yeah. I don't understand. There was this time lapse in there from the time that we realized that he was sick until my brothers came. He must have been sick more than three weeks. I don't think that he told me he had cancer. I think he just told me he was really sick. He didn't really want me to call my mom and tell her.

Rr: Did that bother you?

Ss: No, I just wondered why.

Rr: Has his death had anything to do with the way you relate to people?

Ss: I've had difficulties in not letting people get really close to me. You look puzzled now, Mikie.

Rr: Yeah, I am. Can you explain that more to me?

Ss: I don't think I do let people get close to me.

Rr: What does that have to do with your dad's death? Were you really close to him?

Ss: Uh huh. There's also some guilt stuff going on in there when I was a freshman. He was on the farm and the bright city lights attracted me and I would rather go to the bright city light than stay on the farm.

Rr: Did that cause hard feelings?

Ss: No, he could just never see any reason for that. The only thing he ever knew was work and that wasn't a pleasure to him.

Rr: Was he an unhappy man?

Ss: I don't think so.

Rr: What kind of difficulties do you feel you face today as a result of his death?

Ss: I don't see it as a problem now, but in my younger life, my inability to set a direction and determine some goals--to be able to stick to something. I can't decide whether that was something inherent or if it was a result of losing him. As I look back on it, if he hadn't died, there would probably have been a stability that wasn't there after he died, because there would have always been someone to go home to. He would never have come to a football game. I just thought about that, nobody ever did come to them. I have two reactions. I get furiously angry, that's a funny reaction. At the moment, I feel furiously angry at myself and the other reaction is that that's very sad, really sad.

Rr: Angry for letting it bother you?

Ss: Uh huh.

Rr: If you had to go through it all again what do you wish someone would have done for you?

Ss: I guess it would be after it happened. It is really funny. I came back from Montana when I went back to school, the P. E. teacher and football coach said, "Well, your dad's dead and there's nothing you can do about that and we gotta live our lives," and that was the only thing that anyone said.

Rr: That was a comfort?

Ss: Well, I don't know. No, it wasn't. I don't even remember having counselors. This is one thing that I think I would change. I would sit down and work this through and express those feelings.

Rr: What would have been different, do you think, if you could have?

Ss: I might have been more successful in school, approached it more positively. But is that good or bad? Maybe I'm doing a better job having gone through that. It's taken me a long time to get where I am. But I don't know where I'd be with the counseling and working with people that I do now if things had been different. I was going to be an aeronautical engineer and then went into music. I don't know where I'd be. And take these guilt feelings I have about not being there for him.

Rr: Not being with him?

Ss: That spring and summer before I knew he was sick. There are things I have to work through. There's something else in there that bothers the hell out of me and I can't figure it out. This is the most I've ever talked about it because I force myself to try. At one time I wouldn't have talked to you about this. I don't know if this is guilt I feel or if it's that a nasty trick has been played on me. He was my whole stabilization. He was the only thing I had.

Rr: Are you mad about it?

Ss: Yes, or I could be feeling sorry for myself.

Rr: I think a lot of times feeling sorry for yourself is wrapped up in anger, saying, "Why me. It's not fair."

Ss: That could be. That could be. I can remember that I was asked to write an autobiography by a junior English teacher and I refused to do it and ended up writing a term paper instead. That caused real conflict between us after that.

Rr: Can you remember why you refused to write it?

Ss: It was none of his business and I felt very protective of what had happened to me.

Rr: That was something very private? If somebody knew those kinds of things, it would be getting too close?

Ss: Yeah, I would say that was it. I would like to be able to resolve it and the ironic thing is that my oldest brother is dead, too.

Rr: Two of the strongest people in your life.

Ss: Yeah, I don't really have that much trouble with my brother's death. Not as many regrets. I don't know about that angry thing. That's something I have to think about, I'm not sure it fits.

Descriptive Conclusions

Seth was an example of how long unresolved grief can linger. After thirty years, Seth felt he still had guilt that had not been dealt with and another feeling that eluded him, but bothered him, nonetheless.

Seth felt his oldest brother was most helpful by taking command. Seth feels his difficulties in life as a result of his father's death dealt mostly with his inability to let people get really close to him. Philosophically, he believed he might not be working with people today if he hadn't lost his father in adolescence. Seth felt that one thing he would have liked to have done was "worked through" and expressed his feelings at the time rather than leaving them unresolved.

WENDY

Background

Wendy was sixteen years old when her father died of a heart attack eight years ago. Wendy had one younger sister and one younger brother. Her mother remarried a year after her father's death. Wendy was pregnant when she married at eighteen. She had two children from that marriage and was recently divorced. Wendy worked as a bookkeeper.

Dialogue

Ss: After the neighbor lady told me we went in the car and there was my mom and she looked like she was on something. Her eyes were just really dilated and really ugly. I'll never forget the expression on her face. She was just completely numb, completely. And I was crying and crying and telling her we were going to make it and it was okay and just going on and on and on. She was just nodding and saying yeah and occasionally a tear would run down her face. We came right home and she had me tell the kids and at that time they were eight and ten. They were both going just crazy. Lori and Kurt just both lost it.

Rr: It sounds like the burden of everything was put right on you. You were comforting your mom rather than she comforting you. Then you had to tell the kids, your mom couldn't bring herself to do it.

Ss: It wasn't like she said, "You've got to do it," it was like I knew I had to do it.

Rr: Because of how she was.

Ss: Yeah, then she went into the house and I just talked to the kids for a few minutes and it wasn't like fifteen minutes later and people started coming and then my mom broke down. People would come in and hug her and she'd cry and cry and cry and then someone else would come in and she'd cry and cry and cry and that went on from Monday afternoon till well, the funeral

was Wednesday afternoon. Those three days were the worst. It was so traumatic and we were trying to locate Uncle Alan, who of course we needed and we couldn't find him. My mother went ahead and called all the relatives and did a real good job of that.

Rr: Do you think the funeral helped?

Ss: Uh huh. That was my first funeral. I'd never been to one before that and I didn't know what to expect, but yeah, it did help. In the first place, I'd asked a real good friend of mine to sing at it and she did the most beautiful job in the world. There was standing room only and as far as where I was at with God and heaven and all of that was concerned, yeah, when the funeral was over, I felt like a ton of bricks had been lifted off my shoulders. I went to the cemetery and I thought this is it, but life goes on and you're just going to have to start adjusting because that's how he'd want you to be about it. It made me feel proud to see who came to his funeral and even if he had only forty-five years, he sure made the most of it, the best of them.

Rr: Did you feel included in your family?

Ss: I felt like they wanted me to be too included and I wanted to get away from it. As much responsibility as I had I didn't like any of it and I got away from it too much. I think I probably had some guilt feelings about that ever since because I didn't want my mother to depend on me and I didn't want the kids to depend on me. When it was all said and done I just felt kind of lonely and subconsciously like someone had shit on me.. It wasn't fair and I wasn't going to do anymore, so I just clung to things that didn't prove to be too constructive or productive.

Rr: What do you mean by that, Wendy?

Ss: I feel like...I'm sure that...and maybe this is a cop out, but I don't feel like I've made many good choices since that day as far as I grabbed Tim--immediately. He was really a good friend of mine and all he was interested in was keeping me talking and keeping me up and being around so that I could share with him when I was down. Well, I wanted more than that right then. I wanted the security of a relationship with a male and so both of us got into that. I got into it because I needed security

and he got into it because he was an All-American boy. And then that did not go good and I think that a lot of bad things happened that first year with Tim. Then Uncle Alan used to come down about every other week and roar me off to breakfast and say things like, "Don't be so sure that your dad was that faithful to your mother," and that as soon as he had enough money he would come and get me out of that situation and I wouldn't have to live with her. He'd tell my little brother he was a flower and that if he could he'd send him to a boys camp. He ignored Lori, just ignored her. He'd tell me horrible things about my mother and at that point I was so vulnerable, I believed him. He looked like Dad and he acted like Dad, in some ways and I wanted him. I wanted him to take care of me and immediately, mother started dating Jim--almost a day to the...a month to the day. I really resented that. So, I think I was so lonely and so confused and so vulnerable that I didn't know what to do.

Rr: So you were grasping at Alan, grasping at Tim, rejecting your mother for what she was doing about then...

Ss: And I didn't want to have anything to do with the kids because they respond to things tragic like that in an entirely different way than I do. They are very, very, very emotional and they don't just cry, they got hysterical and I couldn't relate. I still can't, although I feel like I have a little more insight and understanding than I did then. But at sixteen, I thought they were freaking out. Mom had to give tranquilizers to Lori so that she wouldn't wake up just screaming in the night and my little brother slept with my mother every night. It was just a bunch of bozos living together for quite awhile. I'd go up to the cemetery a lot and just sit and wonder, "What is going on?" I felt like I'd lost a friend--a friend who knew where it was at. I needed him and he was gone and I didn't know what to do. I was so dependent on him I'm amazed.

Rr: What kind of difficulties do you feel you face today because of it all?

Ss: For one thing, I think I've always had a tendency to be really selfish, but I got more selfish then because I felt like I'd been dumped on and nobody was going to dump on me again and I was going to watch out for my own best interests. So as result, it's been really hard for me to really give a lot of myself to Mother and the kids--just myself, not things. That just started

to kind of happen in the last year. Another thing along that line, I think that as much as he wanted us to be independent and do well for ourselves, we had to do that really slowly and gradually and trust him and believe what he told us about life. At sixteen he was just beginning to let me make my own choices, but he was still doing a lot of my guiding and steering. He was just starting to teach me to be independent. I don't think I got that far yet where I had a lot of self-confidence in making right decisions. I felt like I was left hanging. I've imposed dependency on Tim and now I resent it. I wanted him to take care of me like a father only that backfired on both of us. I expect a lot of that from my friends, I expect them to advise me and tell me what to do and say. I don't think I've ever been really independent because of that, if that makes sense.

Rr: Or the independence is delayed.

Ss: Yeah, yeah.

Rr: So you became a dependent person and maybe it isn't in your nature to be dependent and now you resent it.

Ss: Right. Right. All of a sudden in the last four or five months, I've felt confident in my abilities and in myself. It's blown my mind and it's blowing Tim's mind because I've imposed all this dependency on him. I don't know if that's the right term, but, I wanted him to take care of me and all of a sudden I want to think and do and act and not feel ashamed or guilty or anything for what I do.

Rr: It sounds like you feel if your dad had lived he would have allowed you that gradual independence and you could have handled it.

Ss: He was such a dominate character and personality that I felt like a master slave, almost. He was the teacher and I was the pupil. Through everything I could talk to him...about drinking, about sex, about dope, about everything. He would advise me on it and I would say, "Okay, that's where it's at." At sixteen I was just starting to get really interested in boys and I'd had a few beers, but not many before that and I was...anytime anything like that would happen I would talk to him about it, but I hadn't really started experiencing much of that yet. I was just on the verge of it, but if he was there I could have gone through it a lot more sensibly than I did.

Rr: With a little more control.

Ss: Yeah, I was senseless because I thought, "Well, shit, whatever."

Rr: Who do you think was most helpful to you during this time?

Ss: I don't know. My friends? But they weren't really, they couldn't understand. I don't really think there was anybody that did that much for me. I thought Uncle Alan, but he was no help. He was probably the most destructive person around.

Rr: But at the time it seemed like he was helping?

Ss: Yeah, it seemed like it because he would write to me and call me and come and see me and when I went to Girls State, he showed up. He'd make me things and I thought it was for me, but it was for him kind of. He was really into all the awards and abilities that I was showing over the state. He loved it. But it was kind of for him, now that I look back on it.

Rr: And at that time it seemed like he was helpful because he paid lots of attention to you.

Ss: Well, my mom was trying to as much as she could, but I couldn't relate to her because I didn't want Jim in the family. I just ...Yuk.

Rr: Did it seem like she was forgetting about your dad by marrying Jim?

Ss: Yeah, in a way. I just couldn't understand how after twenty-five years of marriage she could, in just one month, be seeing a guy, necking with a guy. When my grandma and grandpa came to see us that fall, two months after my dad had died, she was sneaking downstairs so she could call Jim on the phone so they wouldn't find out. So I was thinking, "Boy, I'm not living with a mother, I'm living with a fellow teenager," and that bothered me. I went out on a big fancy date with a kid, got all duded up and we came home and were going to do a little heavy mashing and Mom and Jim had beat us to the couch. I thought that it was crazy. They really hurt my feelings. Why should any sixteen year old have to go in the house and have her date rush home because her mom is parked out in the front driveway with her date. Jim was so quiet and so careful not to impose on any of us that I didn't know him and I still don't

know him that well. I love him, but I don't know him that well. And I really didn't know him then because he was a complete opposite. He doesn't talk a lot. Everything about him is a complete opposite from Dad and it was strange to think that he would move in with us and that he would go to bed with Mother in Mother and Dad's bed and that he would put his shaving stuff where Dad's shaving stuff belonged and that kind of thing.

Rr: I bet it did seem pretty freaky.

Ss: Yeah, it was.

Rr: Can you look back on it now and see why your mom felt she had to do that?

Ss: Mother was as dependent on Dad if not a hundred times more than I was and she needed someone. Although she told me six weeks ago that she married Jim way too soon, way too soon, and that she's been paying for it ever since. She's glad she's married to him now and she adores him and he adores her, but it just caused so many problems for all of us. But maybe Mother and I are more alike than I'd like to admit and that's why we can't relate well. She's as impulsive as I am. She clung to a man and so did I, only I clung to a boy, not a man. At the time Mother and Jim got married is just about the time Tim and I started having sex. And so not only was I dealing with a new step-dad moving in, I was starting to have to fret and stew over every period, plus having to go through the whole guilt trip. What was I doing? I was only seventeen years old and I didn't want to get pregnant and I didn't really want to have sex with Tim, but I knew that would keep him around for awhile and it did in a funny sort of way.

Rr: It really all got very complicated.

Ss: Oh, it got so complicated. And my little sister started getting into trouble soon after Tim and I got married. The police were looking for her on Friday nights. She was in frat houses and she was going with a kid who had an apartment and she was in seventh grade. She was drinking tons, smoking cigarettes, and smoking dope and my mother just absolutely flipped out. Jim, bless his heart, had to impose then and he just lit into her and some pretty strict ground rules were laid after that. It was just a snowball. Two weeks after my dad died I ran over

Kurt. It didn't really hurt him, well, it hurt him, but it didn't kill him. It peeled a lot of skin off his back and he still has gigantic scars there. That haunts me. I hit my little brother with the car. I mean he leaped out from under it and started yelling, "I'm not dead, I'm not dead." My poor mother was having a stroke.

Rr: Wow. Wendy, if you had to go through it all again, what do you wish someone had done for you that wasn't done?

Ss: I wish...I really wish that I could have been counseled by... like a man who could have said, "Okay, since you're sixteen years old, these are things that may come up in your mind or emotions and let's talk it out and let's stay together and let's go through it." If I could have had someone like that, that could have really guided me through it and given me some advice so that I wouldn't have just struck out on my own. I was overwhelmed at some of the things I experienced. I didn't understand why I got involved sexually. I didn't really understand at the time. I didn't understand why every couple of months I wanted to go and just get so completely dazzled drunk that I didn't know my own name. I didn't know why I didn't want to be with my mother or why I didn't want to touch her or feel her or hold her or anything. I didn't know why, I just knew I didn't want to. I really think that I could have been counseled.

Rr: Would the counselor have had to approach you or could you have gone on your own?

Ss: I think they would have had to come to me because I felt guilty about all those things. I felt guilty about the sex. I felt guilty about the drugs. I felt guilty about being a creep to my mom. I felt guilty about not spending time with the little kids. I didn't want to go and tell anyone I was into those things. So I think if someone had said let's go talk, are these some of the things that are happening to you, I just think it might have helped me a bit. I might not have done anything differently, but I might have. But nobody seemed to know where I was coming from. I've always been able to hide pretty well where I'm at. They couldn't have talked in generalities. They could have said are you experiencing this and this with your mother and I don't see where that would have been too hard to pick up in a sixteen year old. All those things were natural and normal.

Rr: Especially if anyone were paying attention.

Ss: Yeah, because at the same time I was getting involved in things that were destructive I was doing phenomenally well in school. I got straight A's, was in honor society, was going to Girls State where I never lost an election and became a state officer. I did really well on the golf tour, got into speech and debate. I was so active and so involved that you would never have known that I was having problems.

Rr: Do you feel that everybody at school was oblivious to the problems you were having?

Ss: Yeah, you bet. I did a heck of a job. I had maybe one or two really close friends that I could say I was really bummed out to, but we were all going through a lot. All of us were on our own trips. My closest friend, her mom and dad were in such a turmoil. Her dad was stepping out on her mom at every opportunity, so she couldn't help me at all. Her's were as big as mine, if not bigger.

Rr: So it seemed on the surface like you were handling things well.

Ss: Yeah, but what I needed was to be talked to specifically and lovingly.

Rr: You said that you wished it had been a man who would have counseled you, since that was the kind of loss you'd had?

Ss: I think so, because I had such a strong desire to talk to somebody and I just couldn't imagine that they would know where I was coming from. They would think I was horrible, if I said I was starting to get sexually involved. You! Miss Girls State, Miss Golfer. Not that I...Not that now it's important, but I was really into high school and all its activities and I was out to be as popular as I could be and I really worked at it. For one thing, I'd always been pretty heavy and I wasn't having a ton of dates, but I sure had a nice smile so I worked on that smile and it helped.

Rr: Did you ever feel really angry about what was going on?

Ss: Yeah, I did. But it didn't last very long. I don't feel like I've ever been really bitter about his death. I've just really felt lonely a lot, really lonely. Like, how come he's dead and

how come I can't recuperate, or whatever? I think a lot of the mistakes I've made over the years have been because I couldn't recuperate which I think is sort of pathetic.

Rr: Do you feel like you ever really accepted his death?

Ss: Yeah, however, I think I've used it as an excuse a lot for the mistakes I've made and that's not really fair--to me, especially. You have to face yourself once in a while.

Rr: If you could use the word acceptance, when do you think that came about?

Ss: Probably right around the time my daughter was born and that was two years after he died. Then I had to accept a lot of things whether I wanted to or not. I mean, he was gone, I was a wife and a mother and that I had to grow up, and I had no choice. None. And it was high time. So I'd say right around then.

Rr: Anything else you'd like to say, that you think I should know?

Ss: No, I think I've covered it thoroughly.

Rr: It doesn't seem like it's hard for you to talk about.

Ss: There was a time when it was really hard. I guess I just wanted to reiterate the fact that I had lost so much.

Descriptive Conclusions

Wendy's life became very complicated after the death of her father. She had been so dependent on him that when he died, she was left confused and insecure. As a result, she looked for security and stability in a relationship with Tim that eventually failed. She sought escape from her confusion in drugs and alcohol. Her mother was as confused and insecure as Wendy, so home didn't provide the stability that Wendy needed.

Wendy felt that no one really helped her. An uncle who seemed helpful at the time proved to be destructive. Her friends had their own problems. For these reasons, Wendy felt that she could have benefited from counseling. She felt that the counselor must approach her with specific concerns, avoiding generalities. The counselor would have had to have been accepting as Wendy felt guilty about her self-defeating involvements. Wendy seemed to be looking for the same qualities in a counselor that she attributed to her father--a person who would guide and give advice, who she could approach with any problem.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the data collected by the researcher during personal interviews with the subjects. Background information concerning each subject was followed by the actual dialogue of the interview. Descriptive conclusions made by the investigator followed the dialogue.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Once the Buddha was stopped by a young woman who had long been childless, and who, after many years, had given birth to a son. The child, playing among the bushes, was bitten by a poisonous snake and died. Pleading with the Buddha to restore her son to life, she received the answer: "Go and bring to me some mustard seeds from the home of people who are not mourning a death." The mother began to wander about in search of such a house, but, after many years, returned empty handed. Seeing her return, the Buddha said: "When you departed, you thought that you and only you had ever suffered a loss through death. Now that you have returned, you know differently. Now you know that the law of death governs us all." [Diskin and Guggenheim, 1967, p. 122-123].

Death touches everyone as the Buddha said. Like the woman in the legend, the loss of a loved one results in feelings of aloneness--that it never happens to others. For the adolescent, the death of a close family member, and particularly a parent, is traumatic. The affects are far-reaching and can have a dramatic influence on the course of the young person's life. The reactions to such a loss vary in degrees from not feeling quite right, to a nagging loneliness, to anger and bitterness, to poor decision-making, and to self-defeating behavior.

The problem of this study was to determine ways school counselors could help students through the bereavement process by eliciting suggestions from adolescents and adults who were adolescents at the time of death of a significant other.

The following conclusions and recommendations were based on suggestions made by such survivors during interviews with the investigator.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicated the following:

- 1) The death of a significant other during adolescence had long range effects that can influence the adolescent's security, relationships with others and other surviving family members, choice of mate, behavior, decision-making abilities, and attitudes toward life.
- 2) The most helpful person to a mourner was a good listener.
- 3) Offers of help were more meaningful than an expression of sympathy.
- 4) Adolescents often avoided facing the death due to their inability to express and handle strong emotions.
- 5) The death of a significant other often acted as a catalyst for complete changes in an adolescent's way of life--new parent, homes, siblings, and school.
- 6) Adolescents felt the need to express their feelings, but often fear criticism.
- 7) Most adolescents experienced anger and guilt following the death of a loved one.
- 8) Adolescents had difficulty in understanding the origins of their feelings.

9) The death of a parent seemed to have a more profound affect on the adolescent than the death of a sibling.

10) Teenagers were less verbal in expressing their feelings about the losses they suffered than were the adults.

11) Each individual had experiences that were uniquely his or hers.

Recommendations

The investigator felt that the following recommendations would help in counseling the grieving student:

1) Counselors must listen without passing judgment and must accept all feelings.

2) Counselors might find it necessary to give information to a bereaved student as to what they may expect in the way of changing feelings. They can then be aware that their feelings are natural and normal.

3) The bereaved student might have to be sought out by the counselor as they may be hesitant to approach the counselor on their own.

4) It may be important for the counselor to talk in specifics rather than generalities about feelings and concerns.

5) Special interest should be taken in the bereaved student and special attention given to the changes taking place in his or her life that cause problems--remarriage, parent's dating, loneliness.

6) The counselor must be sensitive to seemingly "normal" behavior that might hide underlying problems in dealing with grief.

7) The counselor in the school needs to have courage to perhaps be overt in letting the grieving students know of their availability.

8) Individual differences should always be kept in mind.

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