

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA

UMI[®]
800-521-0600

DISSERTATION

THE EFFECTS OF POST-FUNERAL RITUALS ON ADJUSTMENT TO
BEREAVEMENT

Submitted By

William Neil Gowensmith

Department of Psychology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 1999

UMI Number: 9947937

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 9947937

Copyright 2000 by Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

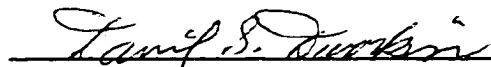
Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

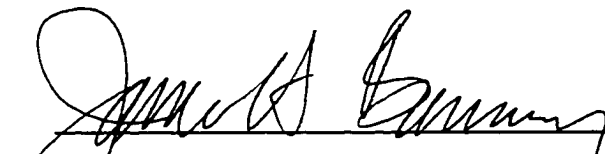
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

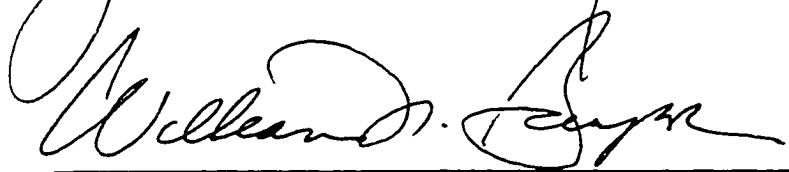
May 12, 1999

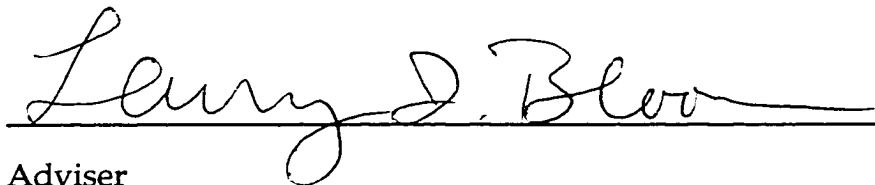
WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER
OUR SUPERVISION BY WILLIAM NEIL GOWENSMITH ENTITLED
THE EFFECTS OF POST-FUNERAL RITUALS ON ADJUSTMENT TO
BEREAVEMENT BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Committee on Graduate Work

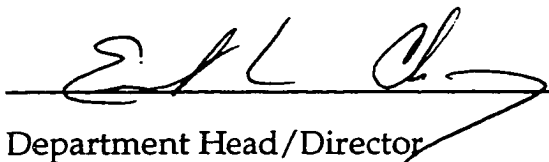








Adviser



Department Head/Director

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION
THE EFFECTS OF POST-FUNERAL RITUALS ON ADJUSTMENT TO
BEREAVEMENT

Although post-funeral grief rituals are being performed with increasing frequency and with positive outcomes, very little research has been done to examine the phenomenon of grief rituals. This study utilized a qualitative, interview-based approach to fully assess the variables and concepts related to the use of grief rituals and their impact on bereavement. Thirteen participants described 39 different grief rituals in this study and explored a wealth of themes and concepts concerning the process of grief rituals from beginning to end. Traditional checks in qualitative methodology were used to ensure the reliability and validity of the results. Several examples of grief rituals were explored in detail.

Primarily, participants outlined the importance of creating a grief ritual that addresses a particular grief need and making that ritual personally meaningful in some fashion. Participants suggested that rituals should utilize symbolic objects, symbolic times and places, appropriate emotional and spiritual tones, and other special people to increase the individual relevance of the ritual. Participants emphasized that rituals that felt personally meaningful were likely to help both resolve their individual grief issue and increase their confidence and self-efficacy regarding their grief process as a whole.

Post-funeral grief rituals seem to retain a unique combination of benefits for the bereavement process. Grief rituals offer the bereaved an opportunity to actively address their grief, to individually tailor the experience to their personal needs, to successfully resolve grief issues, and to increase their confidence and motivation to further address their grief. It is recommended that grief rituals be encouraged to bereaved individuals. Bereaved individuals that have an appropriate amount of emotional strength and self-awareness to create and perform a personally meaningful grief ritual are likely to receive several benefits from doing so.

William Neil Gowensmith
Psychology Department
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
Summer 1999

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge those people that have helped make this dissertation possible. First, I would like to thank my committee, Dr. William Boyer, Dr. Daniel Dworkin, and Dr. James Banning for their guidance. I would like to thank my adviser and chair, Dr. Larry Bloom, for helping me take this project from a jumble of amorphous questions to a viable research study. Hospice of Larimer County and Nancy Jakobsson in particular have made this project possible through their helping in conceptualizing this study, referring potential participants, and helping me understand the field of grief and loss. This study would never have been completed had it not been for the participants themselves; it was truly an honor for me to hear their innermost thoughts and feelings and learn from their experiences and willingness to help others. I wish to extend special thanks and love to family for their constant support throughout my academic career. Finally, my deepest thanks and love go to my wife, who helped me immeasurably with her constant love, support, guidance, and reassurance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	.1
Method	.9
Results.	15
Conclusions	32
Table 1	39
Table 2	40
References	41
Appendix A—Limitations of the Traditional Funeral Ritual	47
Appendix B—Theories and Models of Grief	50
Appendix C—Defining and Illustrating Ritual	65
Appendix D—Clinical Evidence for the Effectiveness of Ritual	76
Appendix E—Theories and Models of Rituals	82
Appendix F—Ritual as a Rite of Passage	88
Appendix G—The Qualitative Approach	91
Appendix H—Letter to Participants	106
Appendix I—Template Interview	108
Appendix J—Descriptions of Rituals and Participants	111
Appendix K—Initial Thoughts about Rituals.	122
Appendix L—Conditions for Successful Rituals	132
Appendix M—Components of Rituals	140
Appendix N—Reactions to Rituals	149

The Effects of Post-Funeral Ritual on Adjustment to Bereavement

The funeral ritual is perhaps the most easily recognized symbol of the grief process and has undergone intense scrutiny in order for people to understand its role in grieving. Most experts agree that the funeral plays a positive and vital function for grievers (Irion, 1976; Rando, 1988; Sanders, 1992). Immediately after the death of a loved one, grievers report that their biggest needs are to be with others and to overcome the shock and denial they feel (Irion, 1990-1991; Rando, 1988). Thus the primary functions of the funeral are gathering social support and forcing an acceptance of the death (Cassem, 1976). Research strongly supports the belief that the funeral ritual facilitates these tasks exceptionally well (Irion, 1976; Rando, 1988; Sanders, 1992). Also, funeral preparations and burial arrangements occupy much of the survivor's time and energy. In fact, research suggests that one of the biggest benefits of the funeral is that it helps the bereaved gain structure and order in a time of chaos (Cassem, 1976; Irion, 1990-91).

However, some experts assert that the funeral is limited in its utility (Irion, 1990-1991; Kollar, 1989). While the funeral is a very effective way of amassing support and overcoming denial, it is not designed to facilitate further stages or tasks of grief—feeling the pain of the loss, adjusting to life without the loved one, and reinvesting energy into new relationships (Irion, 1976; Sanders, 1992). It would be inappropriate for the funeral ritual to attempt to facilitate these tasks since the bereaved are simply not ready to

complete these tasks so soon after the death occurs. (Please see Appendix A for an expanded discussion on the limitations of the funeral.)

Mediating factors that complicate grief reactions

Nearly all grief models concur that the most intensive and difficult processes of grief occur after the funeral (Bowlby, 1980; Engel, 1964; Lindemann, 1944; Rando, 1984; Worden, 1991). Several factors make the period of grief after the funeral especially difficult. First, much of the most intense emotional work occurs between 3-24 months after the death (Horacek, 1995; Rosenblatt, Walsh, & Jackson, 1976). One of the more consistent findings is that most survivors experience a period of prolonged “downtime” at about six months after the death (Lattanz & Hale, 1984-85; Schucter & Zisook, 1993). Second, social support tends to wane after about six months (Rando, 1988; Sankar, 1991). Supporters become unsure about what else to say or how to help, and they begin to call or write less frequently. Survivors often are left with a considerable amount of grief after much of the social support is gone.

Third, during the post-funeral period, the grieving process becomes more unstructured. Survivors report that they don’t really know what to do to get through their grief (Benoliel, 1985; Euster, 1991). Questions shift from “How did he or she die?” and “What kind of funeral should we have?” to more expansive questions such as “What do I do with my life now?” and “How will I ever move on without them?” Feelings also begin to change; sadness, anger, confusion, apprehension, guilt, and dread may overtake earlier reactions of shock and denial (Raphael, Middleton, & Misso, 1993; Weizman & Kamm, 1985). Unfortunately, the European culture predominate in the United States

does not encourage these feelings to be publicly expressed after the funeral (Kawaga-Singer, 1994).

Finally and perhaps most importantly, during this period the survivor feels an increasing amount of responsibility to move forward through the grief process (Fitzgerald, 1994; Rando, 1984). Focus naturally shifts from the death event and funeral to the survivor and on their responsibility for resolving their grief. Often the survivor feels pressure to “hurry up and get over it” and move on with life. In summary, the survivor feels more pressure to resolve their grief in spite of the lessened social support, their changing feelings, and the increasingly vague later stages of grief.

Theoretical understanding

Most models of grief predict this difficult time period and follow the same basic progression: accepting the loss, feeling the loss emotionally, adjusting to a new life without the deceased, and reinvesting their energy into new relationships while providing closure on the relationship with the deceased (Bowlby, 1980; Engel, 1964; Lindemann, 1944; Parkes, 1974; Rando, 1984; Worden, 1991). Although grief models predict these grief stages, they have been largely lacking in determining what factors help survivors navigate through them. (See Appendix B for a more complete discussion of theories of grief.)

Grief is a process in which survivors are trying to move forward; however, because of the factors listed above, grief is often experienced as exceptionally frustrating (Worden, 1991). Survivors may be ready to continue resolving their grief, but they often are met with a lack of guidance and tools to facilitate their process.

The use of post-funeral rituals

A growing body of theoretical and clinical thought points to the use of post-funeral rituals to facilitate the later grief processes. Just as the funeral ritual has been widely adopted as an important tool in symbolizing the beginning of the grief process (Cassem, 1976; Irion, 1990-1991), post-funeral rituals are becoming more common as tools to help navigate through grief after the funeral. Many authors are beginning to explore the potential of utilizing post-funeral rituals to continue the active grief work begun by the funeral (Feinstein & Mayo, 1990; Rando, 1988; Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990).

Rituals are found world wide in a host of contexts (Myerhoff, 1984) and can be defined as specific behaviors or activities that give symbolic expression to certain feelings and thoughts of the actor individually or as a group (Rando, 1985). Rituals may be repeated or be one-time occurrences (Rando, 1984). Examples of post-funeral rituals include burning candles, writing poetry, saying prayers, singing special songs, releasing balloons, taking trips, visiting special places, making scrapbooks, or having good-bye meals with friends (Bolton & Camp, 1989; Goldberg, 1981-82; Feinstein & Mayo, 1990; Kollar, 1989). (See Appendix C for more complete definitions and examples of rituals.)

The clinical experience of several authors supports the theory that post-funeral rituals help adjustment to bereavement. Several authors report case studies in which post-funeral rituals were very helpful to survivors (Feinstein & Mayo, 1990; Janowiak, Mei-tal, & Drapkin, 1995; Rando, 1985; Reeves, 1990; van der Hart, 1988; Whitaker, 1985). Post-funeral rituals are used to help survivors complete the later stages of grief:

experiencing the pain of the loss, adjusting to the loss, and reinvesting in new relationships (Bolton & Camp, 1989; Rando, 1984). Some studies report that post-funeral rituals increase survivors' adjustment to bereavement (Bolton & Camp, 1989; Rosenblatt, et al., 1976), while others provide a method for developing and implementing rituals in bereavement counseling (van der Hart & Goossens, 1987). In fact, most publications which aim to facilitate the grief process include sections on performing post-funeral rituals. It seems as though the conventional wisdom of most grief clinicians is that grief rituals are quite useful in helping the bereaved navigate their grief process more effectively. (Please see Appendix D for research and clinical evidence pertaining to post-funeral ritual.)

Theoretical understanding of ritual effectiveness

Despite the promotion of post-funeral rituals by grief experts, it is still unclear why post-funeral rituals seem so effective. Some authors use psychological theories to explain how rituals facilitate grief; rituals may provide a sense of control, encourage the person to be active in their grief, validate the death, or provide meaning (Attig, 1991; James & Cherry, 1988; Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990; Rando, 1985). Other authors provide clinical wisdom or experience, saying that rituals ease the difficulty of anniversaries and holidays, gather social support, and provide survivors a way to express their grief and emotions non-verbally (Irion, 1990-1991; Sanders, 1991; Sankar, 1991; Schucter & Zisook, 1993). (Please see Appendix E for an expanded discussion on the theories and models of post-funeral rituals.)

Other researchers attempt to explain how post-funeral rituals facilitate grief using a more theoretical perspective. They explain that rituals are commonly used to symbolize rites of passage (Rando, 1984; van Gannep, 1960). Rites of passage are defined as common experiences that most people in a culture experience and attach symbolic meaning to in order to make the experience more meaningful (Danforth, 1982). Examples include marriage, adolescent initiation rites such as bar mitzvah, special birthdays, and death. Rituals are often used to help structure these rites of passage; marriage ceremonies, driving tests, birthday traditions, and funerals are common examples.

Rites of passage by definition include stages of separation, transition, and reaggregation (Sanders, 1991; van Gannep, 1960); it is interesting to note how closely these stages reflect the grief stages of acceptance, adjustment, and reinvestment. Some authors postulate that because of this conceptual similarity, and since rituals are effective in navigating other rites of passage, rituals are ideally suited for facilitating the grief process as well (Bolton & Camp, 1991; Rando, 1985; Sanders, 1991; van der Hart & Goossens, 1987). The funeral is a well-known example for navigating the stage of separation. Accordingly, these authors suggest that post-funeral rituals may be ideal for addressing the typically unstructured stages of transition (adjustment) and reaggregation (reinvestment) by providing the benefits associated with rituals in other rites of passage—providing meaning, giving structure, offering direction, and encouraging action. (Please see Appendix F for a discussion about the post-funeral ritual as a rite of passage.)

Purpose of study

It seems that most grief experts agree that post-funeral rituals are effective in facilitating adjustment to bereavement. However, despite some clinical and theoretical speculation, no studies have systematically examined how post-funeral rituals may impact the bereavement process. It seems important to understand how post-funeral rituals facilitate adjustment to bereavement. By understanding how rituals help, grief counseling might become more effective by utilizing rituals and their unique healing properties as common practice. Also, understanding how rituals help could provide additional insight into the grief process and the needs of the bereaved.

For these reasons, this study examined the benefits post-funeral rituals provide in facilitating adjustment to bereavement. The variables and factors that comprise post-funeral rituals were examined to better understand how successful post-funeral rituals could impact the course of bereavement. In this study, bereaved individuals who had utilized post-funeral rituals in their grief process were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Common themes across individuals were explored, and conclusions were reached regarding the utility of rituals. This research was seen as a hypothesis-generating study in which the goal was to explore the perceptions and experiences of the participants as well as raise research questions for future studies. It was unlikely that a single theory would emerge from this study that would completely encompass how or why post-funeral rituals facilitate adjustment to bereavement; however, this study explored and described as many themes, variables, and benefits of

post-funeral rituals as possible so that grief experts can gain a greater understanding of post-funeral rituals in general.

This study attempted to provide a foundation for understanding how grief rituals can facilitate grief. A qualitative methodology was tailor-made for this type of study. First, the information needed for this type of study was likely to be emergent, unpredictable, and personally unique. A qualitative approach allowed the researcher to understand the concepts and themes of grief rituals in rich detail. The emphasis was on attempting to understand the complexity and variation endemic to the grief process from the point of view of the participants. Second, the literature on grief rituals is small in quantity and theoretical in nature. There are currently no clear questions to be asked in a systematic way. Until more is known about the topic as a whole, specific scientific studies will be of limited utility as there will be no core of reference to provide context or link them together. A qualitative approach gave a greater understanding of the phenomenon as a whole and served as a launching pad for several future quantitative studies. (Please see Appendix G for a discussion of the qualitative approach.)

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 13 participants who had experienced the death of a loved one and performed at least one post-funeral ritual. Five males and eight females were interviewed, ranging in age from 28 to 72 years old. The mean age for participants was 42 years, with the majority of participants between 40 and 60 years old. All participants lost their loved ones at least six months before being interviewed. Participants were initially selected from a local Hospice chapter; bereavement counselors from Hospice met with the researcher to create a list of former clients who used post-funeral rituals in their bereavement. Letters were mailed to these clients explaining the study and requesting their assistance. (See Appendix H for a copy of this letter.) Postcards were mailed with the letters so interested clients could indicate their interest in participating. The researcher then called potential participants, explained the study, and asked if they were willing to participate. Other participants were added through purposeful sampling (Guba, 1981); initial participants from Hospice recommended other people who had performed post-funeral rituals. These participants were called by the researcher to confirm their willingness to participate and to schedule the interviews. Eight participants were former Hospice bereavement clients, while five were not affiliated with Hospice. Participants met three criteria of inclusion for the study: 1) The death of their loved one occurred more than three months before the interview; 2) the participant performed some

sort of grief ritual to aid in the grief process; and 3) the participant consented to inclusion in the study.

Because of the exploratory nature of this study, no specific demographic or grief variables were used to select participants. Four participants lost their spouses, three participants lost their parents, two participants lost their children, two participants lost their siblings, one participant lost a fiancée, and one participant lost several friends. All deaths were of natural causes and illnesses except for the two children and one fiancée, who died in car accidents. The length of time between the date of death and the interview ranged from six months to 18 years, but most averaged one to two years. Three post-funeral rituals were performed immediately after the funeral, but most rituals were performed between three months to two years after the death. The post-funeral rituals that participants performed exhibited a wide range of characteristics that will be explained later in this study.

Measures

A semi-structured interview was followed for each interview. All participants were asked a standard battery of questions, incorporating diagnostic, historical, demographic, and theoretical factors. Each interview also incorporated spontaneous questions as the interview dictated. Therefore, each participant received a fixed number of standard questions as well as any spontaneous questions that seemed important and relevant to the participant and their grief process. (See Appendix I for a template of the interview used in this study.)

Procedure

The researcher contacted participants by the process indicated above. They were interviewed individually. Interviews lasted between 35 and 70 minutes. After 11 interviews were completed, the researcher concluded that additional interviews would yield little novel information. Two additional interviews were then conducted to ensure that this was the case.

Each interview was analyzed after it was completed to detect themes. Later interviews incorporated themes and factors from previous interviews to provide focus for later interviews and to enhance reliability and validity. Debriefing statements and a contact number for further questions were given to each participant upon completion of each interview.

The researcher gave transcribed interviews to three local bereavement experts to increase reliability and validity of the findings. A total of six early interviews were given to these grief counselors. The counselors individually analyzed the interviews for themes and factors that seemed to be relevant to the use of post-funeral rituals. These comments were compared to the themes developed by the researcher and integrated into the final conclusions. When inter-rater reliability was established, the researcher analyzed the remaining interviews alone.

Proposed Analysis

Grounded theory was the qualitative approach used for this study. Grounded theory is an approach that attempts to derive a theory directly from the data from the participants, linking their perspectives to general psychological theories (Leedy, 1997;

Tesch, 1990). The theory derived is thus “grounded” in the interview data gathered from the participants.

The specific analysis tool used in this study was constant comparative analysis. Constant comparative analysis is commonly associated with grounded theory (Glaser, 1978) and seems especially well-suited for this study. The constant comparative method analyzes data by breaking down the data into coded segments and then synthesizing them back together using a coding hierarchy based on themes found in the data. Analysis contained the following procedures:

- 1) The interviews were recorded and transcribed.
- 2) Each transcribed response was coded using an “open coding” or “Level I coding” process (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The first level of code was limited to a descriptive rewording of the lines of transcript, simply making the transcript statements more parsimonious. For example, the statement, “I think that the answer is that the ritual really decreased my level of pain” was coded as the descriptive statement “ritual decreased her pain” in the Level I coding process. Level I coding produced concepts that fit the data (Hutchinson, 1987).
- 3) Each of the descriptive concepts generated by Level I coding was examined to find relationships among them. This elevated the open coding to more abstract “Level II coding” (Hutchinson, 1987). The second level of coding put the first-level codes into second-level conceptual groups. For example, multiple Level I statements about the various emotions that arose during the rituals were grouped into a larger inclusive category called “Feelings from ritual.”

4) The conceptual groups and relationships produced by Level II coding were analyzed across all participants to find the major constructs and themes of the study. These themes were coded as “Level III codes” (Hutchinson, 1987). These third-level codes tied the data from the Level II codes together and allowed the data to speak to the major research questions of the study. In this study, a third level code was “Ritual promotes an atmosphere which allows griever to address their individual grief needs. One way this is accomplished is through the awareness and expression of feelings. Others processes include....”

These procedures of the constant comparative method produced similarities and differences of the data that led to a rich understanding of the data by comparing concepts with concepts and themes with themes. The constant comparative method is designed to produce a thematic conceptualization among all three levels of coding which “weaves the fractured data back together” (Glaser, 1978).

Validity and reliability

External validity is usually very high using this type of approach. Data comes directly from the participants in their own words. However, generalizability may be low since the experiences of these participants may be unique in some respects. Some validity checks can increase the likelihood of generalizing findings (Krefting, 1990). This study employed nominated samples—that is, participants representing the general population were chosen from a panel of grief experts. The researcher met with the Hospice bereavement staff to select potential participants. Also, the study used the method of dense description to increase external validity. Participants, settings, and

experiences were described in enough detail so that others can assume the task of generalizability.

Internal validity is often problematic in qualitative research areas. The subjective nature of the research makes it somewhat difficult to monitor the accuracy of the findings and research process. Several techniques were employed in this study to increase the internal validity (Guba, 1981). The most vital technique was that of triangulation. Other researchers coded the data for some interviews to promote reliability. Also, the data was analyzed from a variety of theoretical perspectives in order to provide convergent validity. Triangulation allowed for a more confident understanding of the data. Also, member checking was used to increase internal validity. This technique checks the various steps of the research process (i.e., the transcripts, second-level codes, etc.) with the participants to validate the accuracy and goodness-of-fit of the findings with the source. This study also used peer examination—a technique which utilized experts in qualitative research methodology to validate the process and findings. Finally, a confirmability audit was maintained. This audit trail provided the background information and evidence for each step of the research process so that a third-level code could be traced back to its origins in the transcriptions of participants.

Results

In this study, a total of 13 participants performed 39 different rituals. Men performed an average of 2.2 rituals while women performed 4.3 rituals. A total of 26 rituals were performed with others present (one ritual was performed in a group therapy setting), and 13 were performed alone. Participants created 31 original rituals and participated in 8 other rituals that had been previously established. (See Appendix J for more descriptive information about the rituals and the participants in this study.)

Many of the experiences described in this study were unplanned or spontaneous events. While participants did spend a great deal of time planning many of their rituals, some arose spontaneously, and some led to unexpected outcomes. Participants consistently attributed these outcomes to the rituals they performed. However, it is important to remember that due to the qualitative approach of this study, direct cause-and-effect links cannot be obtained from the interview data. It is impossible to assume with statistical certainty that the outcomes and experiences which participants report are due to the causes to which they attribute them. However, the strength and the purpose of this study's use of qualitative methodology is to describe the multiple number of themes related to participants' experiences of performing post-funeral rituals. Specific interview questions (i.e., temporal order of events, differentiating causation, differentiating benefits of components of rituals) specifically addressed each area described in this section. The depth and breadth of the participants' responses provided data high in external validity.

Therefore, while we cannot be certain that the participants were completely accurate in their assumptions of causation of outcomes, we can be sure that they were genuine in their responses and that they endeavored to tell the truth as best as they knew it.

A total of 2,170 first-level codes were developed from the transcribed interviews. These first-level codes were grouped into 54 second-level categories according to categorical themes. These second-level codes were grouped into four third-level categories: initial thoughts about rituals, conditions for successful rituals, components of rituals, and outcomes of rituals (see Table 1). These four themes encompass all the first and second level codes and thus represent all the themes and statements the participants discussed in their interviews. These four third-level categories will be discussed by exploring the first and second-level codes that comprise them.

Initial Thoughts about Rituals

Participants were asked an average of 13.5 questions regarding the time period before they began their rituals. Their responses were placed into two main second-level categories. First, participants described their initial concerns and hesitancy about performing rituals. Second, participants outlined the various reasons they performed rituals. (See Appendix K for more information about the initial thoughts of the participants.)

Hesitancy about rituals. About half of the participants interviewed in this study reported some initial uncertainty about performing rituals. Six explained that they were initially reluctant to engage in rituals because they were unsure what purpose rituals could serve or how to design one. Others said they were afraid the ritual would be an

emotionally overwhelming experience. To ease these concerns, participants explained that an appropriate understanding of their own grief processes and a willingness to focus on their grief helped them feel prepared for their rituals. For example, one woman said she needed a certain amount of emotional strength in order to feel prepared for her ritual:

Ritual is a very safe way...to deal with your emotions. It's a very refreshing way because it feels good. But it didn't a year ago. Dealing with mother's things didn't feel good at all. It was too close to the time. I just couldn't. But now that time is passing, and I can be stronger. My thoughts are broader.

Reasons for performing rituals. Participants in this study performed rituals for a variety of different reasons. Three main reasons for performing rituals emerged from the participants' interviews: for the facilitation of their grief tasks, for remembrance, and for their children and families.

Participants reported examining their grief processes and then developing rituals that addressed their individual grief needs. All participants used at least one of their rituals to facilitate at least one of the grief tasks outlined by Worden (1992). Seven participants developed rituals to help accept the death event and their inevitable grief processes (task one), while nine participants created rituals to facilitate emotional awareness and expression (task two). Four of these nine participants said rituals were "cathartic" in that they helped participants express the feelings of grief they previously had been blocking. Eleven participants created rituals to facilitate adjustment to the loss of the deceased and to help take care of the necessary tasks that arose after the death occurred (task three). Lastly, all of the participants developed rituals to help them provide closure on their grief process and/or feel closer to their loved one (task four). One

man, by writing the words “Good-bye” and “I love you” on a panel of the AIDS quilt he made for his brother, said he felt free to move on because he knew the quilt would be a lasting memorial he could revisit in the future. Another man described how he developed a ritual to help him feel closer to his loved ones:

Well, prior to doing [the ritual] I really didn’t have much of a mechanism of trying to maintain some kind of connection with the people who I lost. And that was the most meaningful thing I wanted to develop for myself—a way to try to maintain some sense of connection.

Another important reason participants gave for engaging in ritual was to remember and honor the deceased person. Every person interviewed in this study reported that they used rituals to help remember the deceased and their relationship to them. Most often, participants used physical objects, such as pictures or candles, to help bring back memories of the deceased. Through remembrance, participants paid respect to their loved ones by honoring their individuality and continuing to promote their personal interests. One man explains the importance of remembering his wife through ritual:

I think maybe in the case of a ceremony, it kind of gives you a chance to reflect on all the memories you had through that whole married lifetime. And to be grateful for it. Maybe it’s a ceremony of thanksgiving.

Finally, involving children and families was very important to participants—each person who had children included them in at least one ritual. Eight parents described how they designed rituals to help their children know the deceased person better, typically by creating photo albums and scrapbooks together. They also explained how they used rituals to help their children understand their family’s traditions and lineage more fully:

I kind of hope [the ritual] would be a way that [my son] could understand me better and kind of have extended roots. And maybe though we don’t live where I

grew up, he could still have a feel for what our family's like. And the traditions and history of [our family]. Sort of feel more like a part of the whole, even though he can't be around those people anymore. That's something all my relatives have given me.

All the parents who participated in this study expressed that these rituals helped model appropriate, healthy grieving to their children and families.

Conditions for Successful Rituals

Participants were asked an average of 11.8 questions to determine if certain conditions were necessary to make rituals successful. Their responses were divided into two main second-level categories. The first condition was that the ritual needed to be personally meaningful to the participant. Second, the development and creation of rituals needed to accurately reflect the participant's needs in order to be successful. (See Appendix L for more information on the necessary conditions for a successful ritual.)

Personal meaning. Overall, perhaps the most significant finding was that rituals needed to be personally meaningful to the participants in order for them to be beneficial. Every participant emphasized the importance of individually tailoring their rituals to make them meaningful. The factor of personal meaning seemed to covary with every other factor described in this study; when participants discussed a factor regarding their rituals, they expressly mentioned that the factor needed to be personally meaningful in order for it to be useful. For example, a widow might clutch her husband's wedding ring in a ritual designed to remember her husband; however, the ring might hold less meaning for a grieving co-worker performing a similar remembrance ritual. Similarly, including religious components, performing a closure ritual or holding the ritual at a certain location all

conveyed individualized meanings to participants. All the factors in this study were mediated by the personal meaning those factors carried for the participants—leading to the overall success of the rituals.

Participants reported that rituals were made personally meaningful primarily by being relevant to the deceased and to themselves. A total of 32 of the 39 rituals were used to symbolize the deceased person or create a lasting symbol of the deceased person, thereby making the ritual relevant to the deceased. Participants ensured that rituals remained relevant by creating rituals that attended to their current grief needs, choosing meaningful times and places to hold the rituals, matching the emotional tone of the rituals to their own emotional states, and incorporating spiritual beliefs into their rituals. Overall, rituals needed to reflect the personality of the participant. Participants reported unanimously and repeatedly that individually tailored rituals were more helpful than rituals without such personal adaptation.

Development and planning of rituals. Participants also spent a great deal of time discussing how the development and planning of their rituals precluded the eventual success of the ritual. First, participants discussed how the origins of their rituals were precursors to their success. Participants created and developed 31 original rituals. The other eight rituals were “prescribed” rituals—that is, rituals that were suggested or performed by others and in which the bereaved person simply participated. Rituals were both simple (taking walks, lighting candles, holding special meals) and elaborate (making gifts and creating memorial markers). Participants said that while all rituals needed to be

personally meaningful in order to be successful, the prescribed rituals ran a higher risk of feeling generic and unhelpful than the original rituals. However, prescribed rituals could be just as useful as original rituals if they were meaningful to the participant:

In this case, it's a relief to me that...Judaism has all these rituals set up for the year of mourning and the immediate year after. I look at it as an excuse to the outside world for doing what I would want to do anyway. I can say, "Well, in the Jewish tradition we do this for this reason." In reality, if I wasn't Jewish, I'd still want seven days to be able to sit and do those things. I'd still want to have that year to experience memorials and so forth that we have for the holidays. But it gives me an excuse for it. It legitimizes it.

Participants also discussed how including others could affect the success of the rituals. Most participants included other people in their rituals—about 66% of the rituals included others, and only two people performed all of their rituals alone. Participants said that including others helped them gather support, create stronger bonds, and share memories of the deceased. One woman explains:

Well, for one thing, [rituals] have really helped me to externalize, you know, have an outward expression of my grief and also to share it with other people. So this way, I am able to do something and share it with others. And it's real important for me to continue to believe that other people miss [my daughter] and that this is helpful for them too.

It is important to remember that participants who included others in their rituals specifically chose certain people to be involved; when strangers were present, the ritual was consistently perceived as less beneficial.

In contrast, participants performed 33% of the rituals alone, and eight people performed at least one ritual by themselves. Participants said they performed some rituals alone because they felt that some aspects of their grief were too private to share with others and that being alone helped them to be less self-conscious. They expressed that

when they were alone, they allowed themselves to experience the ritual more deeply because they were not concerned with what others would think:

I don't feel right about just telling people about [the ritual] for some reason. It seems like a private thing. If someone else was there I wouldn't do it. It's my time...And if I get upset, I don't want anyone to see me. [I don't have to worry about] what anybody else thinks, or anybody else feeling like they're not participating or whatever. It's just my time.

It is important to remember that when discussing the necessary conditions of successful rituals, the primary key is making the rituals personally meaningful. All participants performed multiple rituals, typically performing different rituals at different times for different reasons. It is impossible to totally delineate which factors needed to be present to create a successful ritual—the factors changed based on individual needs. However, participants emphatically stated that if the above factors were individually tailored to create a personally meaningful experience, then the ritual was more likely to be successful. Therefore, like all the factors described in this study, the factors which are inherent in planning and developing successful rituals are subject to the larger precursor of personal meaning.

Components of Rituals

Participants were asked an average of 10.3 questions to ascertain what types of elements comprised most rituals. Participants described several common components that were shared across many different rituals. Four main second-level categories summarize these elements: symbolic elements specifically chosen by the participants, the presence of emotions, the presence of spirituality, and participants' meta-awareness of performing a ritual. (See Appendix M for more information about components of rituals.)

Use of symbolic elements. Ritual is defined as a symbolic act; accordingly, participants used rituals to symbolize several different things. The use of symbolism was enacted in many ways. To begin, participants included symbolic objects in 29 of the 39 rituals. They reported that physical objects were central to their rituals and helped make the rituals feel more significant. Objects—most often photographs, flowers, candles, and letters—were typically used to symbolically represent or remember the deceased person. For example, one man picked out one star for each of his friends who had died from AIDS; he explained that each star helped him remember and feel connected to that person.

Other important symbolic components included the time and location of the rituals. Ten participants regularly held rituals at symbolic times of year or on special symbolic days such as birthdays, deathdays, holidays, and anniversaries. For example, one woman dedicated a memorial for her daughter on June 21st, the first day of summer, because it symbolized her daughter's love for summertime.

In addition, nine participants planned rituals at symbolic locations. Locations usually symbolized the deceased person's interests (mountains or rivers, for example) or brought comfort to the participants and provided a common meeting place (graves or memorial markers). Five participants created permanent memorials in symbolic locations. One woman describes the importance of marking the location where her daughter was killed:

On the anniversary of her death this year, my other daughter and one of her friends and my mom and I all met there [at the scene of the accident]. It's not really a substitute for a grave, but it's the last place my daughter was alive. And so that's where her spirit left. And so it's important to me. I mean, that's just as close as I can get to where she was alive last. It just sort of marks the place.

Presence of emotions. Other components were commonly found in most rituals, though they did not carry the same symbolic nature of the above elements. These included the role of emotions, spirituality, and the meta-awareness of doing the ritual itself. These components were critical to the success of most rituals. The most consistent component found in rituals was the role of emotions. Every participant reported that 100% of their rituals included an emotional aspect, and each emphasized the critical role that emotions played in their rituals. About one-third of the participants said that the ritual created a safe, non-threatening atmosphere in which they felt more free to experience and express their grief emotions. In this way, participants said rituals helped them become aware of their feelings, express their feelings, and deal with their feelings.

Participants felt a wide range of feelings during their rituals (see Table 2). Participants reported that 76% of their feelings were positive, most often reporting feeling good, peaceful, or loving. These three emotions alone were reported a total of 87 times. In total, 61 positive emotions were reported 193 times. Overall, positive emotions characterized the majority of the feelings experienced during rituals.

In contrast, participants reported some negative feelings as well (see Table 2). Participants reported feeling sad, challenged, and overwhelmed a total of 37 times. Altogether, 19 negative emotions were reported a total of 52 times. Five participants said they felt self-conscious and apprehensive at the beginning of the rituals. However, four of these participants reported that these feelings decreased as they became more involved in the rituals. Interestingly, six participants reported having conflicting feelings during their rituals. Feelings of love and appreciation often conflicted with feelings of anger and pain.

For example, one woman felt appreciative of the compassionate memorials to her daughter but also felt angry because it reinforced the reality of her daughter's death:

Whenever you have a significant death, the nice things that are done for you, you appreciate, but at the same time you hate them. Because you would much rather that the person you lost still be around. And so I'd do anything to have my child back as opposed to having this wreath or to know how nice this person is. So there's some dual emotions there.

Presence of spirituality. All participants included spiritual components in at least one ritual and emphatically described their importance. One-third of the rituals described in this study included a spiritual component. Four participants used Christian and Jewish elements in their rituals, while the other nine participants used non-religious spiritual elements. The spiritual elements, whether religious or not, seemed to center on the role of connecting to a higher power for guidance and support. Prayers often focused on asking God to protect the deceased people and their families. Similarly, several people used spiritual elements to gain new perspectives about life and death. One man explained:

The ritual somehow created a setting where there was more solitude. And it wasn't just only choosing these stars to be connected to these individuals, but it was almost like being connected to the universe. You know, being connected to the cosmos. And there's a certain change of feeling inside your heart and inside your gut when you have those experiences of really feeling that connection to the larger cosmos or to the larger universe. And wondering a lot about, "What's my fate going to be? What's in store for me?"

Meta-awareness of performing rituals. Finally, the very act of performing the ritual was in itself often a significant component to participants. Six people said that labeling their actions as rituals made those behaviors more meaningful and significant. One woman reported that sorting through her mother's possessions was more meaningful after she thought of it as a ritual. Before ritualizing her task, it had been a tedious activity. The

same task, when given the label of ritual, became a more hopeful opportunity that increased her level of motivation and gave her a new perspective of her mother. Three other participants reiterated this type of experience, saying that rituals reinforced the importance of the grief process to themselves and to others.

Outcomes of Rituals

Participants were asked an average of 14.5 questions to delineate the outcomes that occurred after performing a ritual. Their responses have been organized into two main second-level categories. First, participants in this study consistently reported that they were pleased with their experiences using rituals. Second, participants described that rituals enacted life changes—reflected by changes in their perspectives, grief processes, and themselves in general. (See Appendix N for more information on outcomes of rituals.)

Positive impressions and evaluations of rituals. The primary outcome participants reported was that rituals were positive experiences. Nearly every participant said that the ritual created positive feelings within them, and that they felt better after the ritual than before. All participants also said that at least one of their rituals helped lessen their grief. Also, several participants viewed the ritual as a powerful coping resource for their grief. One woman passionately described the importance of ritual when she said it helped her "survive" her grief process.

Participants reported that in spite of their initial reluctance to perform rituals, they valued rituals very highly after they performed them. Several people related that while rituals could be emotionally difficult experiences, the benefits they gained were worth the hardship. In fact, 11 of the 13 participants encouraged other people to perform

grieving rituals. Also, six participants said they are actively planning additional rituals themselves. The majority of participants reiterated these types of sentiments, saying rituals were a critical part of their grief processes. As one man said, his ritual was the best thing that had happened to him since his brother died; he is currently planning a new ritual to further express his feelings for his brother.

Life changes. One of the most common outcomes described by participants was the significant amount of life changes they experienced after participating in their rituals. Change occurred in several areas—in their perspectives, grief processes, and themselves.

About 83% of participants said the rituals significantly changed their perspectives of the deceased person and of their own lives. Seven people reported that their perspectives of the deceased people had changed. Some participants said they began to see the deceased people in a fuller, more well-rounded light. One woman explained that a ritual “crystallized” her memories of her mother, making them more permanent, positive, and clear. Participants began incorporating into their own lives family traditions and personal qualities that the deceased people valued. Participants were also able to remember lessons of life that they had learned during their relationship with the deceased people. Lastly, participants replaced painful memories of their loved ones as sick and dying with positive memories of their loved one as healthy and vivacious. In these ways, rituals helped change participants’ perspectives of the deceased.

Participants also reported that the rituals created a new opportunity to focus on their own personal growth, thus changing their perspectives on themselves:

At first I started off doing [the ritual] for my sister and then I realized, “Wow. This really is part of me. I really like this.” This [ritual] is like a therapy for me. This is better than going to a counselor and spending all that money, you know what I mean? It’s like I’m being my own therapist and taking care of things myself. It’s a new period for me—I’m mainly nurturing myself.

Another outcome of rituals was the change in participants’ grief processes. All participants reported that rituals helped them successfully address their grief tasks in multiple ways. For example, seven participants said their rituals helped them acknowledge and accept their grief. Eight said the intensity and frequency of their emotions had decreased after performing their rituals. As one woman described, “A lot of the feelings still come up, but the blowout of emotions just doesn’t happen anymore.” Similarly, six participants said the rituals helped them feel a wider range of emotions than they had felt before the rituals. Four others said the rituals gave them closure on their grief that they had not previously been able to attain.

Further changes in participants’ grief processes were evidenced by their reports that their actions were more focused and productive after the rituals. Eight participants described being more physically active and accomplishing more tasks after their rituals. One woman described how her ritual of giving symbolic presents to others increased her activity level by forcing her to get out of the house, talk with others, and organize her materials:

I think [the ritual] gave me something to do. I can’t say it was easy to do. But it was a project...that I could focus on and talk about at the same time. It felt like I was accomplishing something. Although it wasn’t anything that needed to be done, I did it because it gave me something to do and it gave me an opportunity to talk about it.

Many other participants described how rituals provided a way of accomplishing meaningful pursuits instead of remaining immobilized by grief.

Overall, more than half of the participants described how their rituals increased their understanding of their grief processes. They said they had more realistic expectations and felt more control over their grief processes. A total of 69% of participants described how their rituals helped structure their grief processes. One woman explained that her ritual was like a buoy that she used to help navigate through her "sea of grief." Her ritual provided both direction, a sense of control, and a tangible way to deal with her grief. Other participants said that creating permanent memorials or yearly rituals put mechanisms in place which provided more structure. In this way, rituals gave participants more control to grieve when and how they needed.

Finally, all participants reported changes in themselves as a result of their rituals. Several described that they felt more "normal" in general. They said they were able to compartmentalize their grief by using rituals, enabling them to return to normal life without being so fundamentally affected by their grief. For example, one woman described how she remembered her loved one and experienced her grief during a yearly ritual. At other times during the year, she limited her grief and went on with her normal routine knowing that she would acknowledge her grief later during the year:

Well, [the ritual] keeps [the grief] fresh but also not too fresh. It keeps it to where I know it's there but it's not always there. It's definitely not a can of worms. It's just like, "Okay, I'm opening my grief for now, for a certain time and period, and that's it." It's going to close up again. So it's definitely helped me control it and, not necessarily understand it, but be able to live with it every day. Because I do live with it every day. I just don't have to think about it every day.

Other participants echoed this experience, saying that by performing their rituals they were able to return to work or school and function more effectively. In these ways, normal life returned more quickly through the use of ritual.

Perhaps the most important outcome of rituals was that 77% of participants said they felt more confident and empowered in their grief after performing their rituals.

Participants typically reported being more committed to actively dealing with their grief after their rituals. Similarly, nine participants said they had more perseverance to get through their grief process as an outcome of their rituals. As one woman explained, the ritual proved that she was choosing to go forward and confront her grief:

And for me that's what ritual is about. It's some way of communicating with myself and with the big scheme of things even when I don't believe in the big scheme. Or when I have my doubts. It's a way to say, "See, I'm going to light this candle for you, damn it."

Because in grief there is a desire to just give up. It's like, "What does any of this matter anyway?" So I think having the ritual is something that helps you maybe stay connected.

And maybe it's like, "Okay. Look. I am persevering through life. I didn't choose this."

And that's more what it is—it's that I didn't choose this.

Other participants described similar outcomes, saying they felt stronger and better equipped to face their grief. Several people described this attitude as one of "survival."

They coupled this attitude of survival with a sense of optimism and hope that characterized most of the rituals in general. Participants reported feeling more "healed" after their rituals, saying they were more confident and upbeat about dealing with both grief and life. Overall, after participants performed rituals, they reported outcomes of

confidence and responsibility in their grief processes, positive benefits fitting their individual grief needs, and an optimistic sense of empowerment that remained with them after the ritual.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to better understand how post-funeral rituals facilitate adjustment to bereavement. The present study was successful in amassing themes from participants which seem to encapsulate how and why post-funeral rituals facilitate bereavement. Participants described the following general progression in their rituals: Participants typically create rituals in order to work through a specific grief task or issue. Successful rituals are always personally meaningful to the participant and include a unique composition of elements (i.e., symbolic objects, spirituality, inclusion of others) which individually tailor the ritual for the participant. Although the ritual is often an emotionally difficult experience requiring a great deal of effort, the participant is very likely to view it as a positive and helpful experience. Finally, after the ritual is completed, the participant experiences life changes that result from performing their ritual. Not only has the participant resolved a specific grief issue in the ritual, he or she is more likely to feel more empowerment, commitment, and motivation to address upcoming grief tasks.

Based on the third-level categories, this study seems to support that post-funeral rituals offer some unique benefits to the regular grief process. Participants found several specific life changes after performing their rituals. Primarily, participants found that they made progress in their specific grief tasks. Rituals helped participants accept the death, express their feelings, adjust to the changing demands of their lives, formulate new relationships with the deceased person, decrease the intensity of their feelings, provide

closure on their grief, and increase their activity level. Rituals that were individually crafted to address these needs were successful in resolving them.

Participants found that their perspectives had changed significantly after performing their rituals. Each person seemed to carry new perspectives of the grief process after the ritual, characterized by more realistic expectations, a deeper understanding about how to navigate difficult aspects of the grief processes, and increased strength and confidence to deal with the struggles of grief. The rituals gave the participants a chance to address their grief needs and successfully resolve them, thereby creating a sense of optimism and self-efficacy regarding their grief process. This seemed to be a primary benefit of rituals.

It may be that the act of performing a ritual is equally as important as addressing the specific needs of the bereaved in the ritual. Perhaps performing a ritual emphasizes to the grieving individual, in a personally meaningful and emotionally safe way, that they are taking control of their grief process and addressing their specific grief needs. Although a substantial portion of participants were reluctant to use ritual in the beginning, they became uniformly positive about their experiences after their rituals, and each had plans to perform more rituals in the future. Rituals seemed to increase their sense of responsibility for their grief as well as their optimism in progressing through their grief. In summary, it seems that personally meaningful rituals address the needs of a bereaved individual, provide a successful experience, and motivate the individual to continue to work through their grief process with increased optimism and confidence. This unique

combination of events found in post-funeral rituals provides the participant with a heightened sense of mastery over the grief process.

Previous authors have searched for theories to describe how and why post-funeral rituals work. Some authors had suggested that successful grief rituals typically needed to feel magical (Siggins, 1983), alter time (Myerhoff, 1984), challenge reality (Kafka, 1983), include others (Zuesse, 1983), or be under the direction of a therapist (Whitaker, 1985); however, these conditions were not found to be absolutely necessary in this study. This study suggests that post-funeral rituals give the bereaved an opportunity to focus on their individual grief needs, work through them in a personally meaningful and symbolic manner, and create an inner sense of mastery and optimism about handling their grief process in the future. However, no singular theory can explain each specific benefit of a post-funeral ritual. Some rituals are successful because they help the bereaved person become more physically active. Some are successful because they facilitate emotional expression. Some help provide closure. However, not every ritual can accomplish each of these goals. Nor can any theory explain or predict how a post-funeral ritual specifically affects a participant.

Based on the results from this study, certain implications can be tendered regarding individuals in grief. First, grieving individuals should ensure that the ritual attends to their individual needs and goals and remains personally meaningful throughout. If elements are present which are not personally relevant, they are unlikely to be helpful. Therefore, symbolic words and objects should be carefully chosen and should represent something personally meaningful to the bereaved. The emotional and spiritual tone of the

ritual should reflect the bereaved person's needs and beliefs. People who employ rituals should be ready for an out-of-the-ordinary experience which is likely to emotionally intense. Including others in the ritual is usually beneficial, but those additional participants need to be carefully chosen. Children and family often make rituals more meaningful, but unfamiliar people may detract from the ritual's impact. Prescribed rituals require special examination to ensure they remain personally meaningful, and spontaneous rituals require a heightened emotional self-awareness on the parts of the grieving individuals for them to accurately address their immediate needs. All of these considerations help to determine if the post-funeral ritual will be personally meaningful to the bereaved individual—the critical factor in making the ritual a beneficial experience.

Some precautions should be considered before beginning a ritual. First, it is common to be reluctant to perform a ritual for the first time; rituals can be atypical experiences with which most people are unfamiliar. Participants in this study reiterated that rituals were often emotionally difficult and intense. People should be prepared for the intense nature of rituals before beginning them, and they should tailor their rituals so the emotional intensity is manageable. Also, it is important to remember that everyone performed different types of rituals. Some people performed a prescribed ritual, then created their own. Sometimes a person would perform a ritual alone and later invite others to participate. Sometimes rituals felt easier to perform than other times. The most important factor was that the ritual attend to the immediate needs of the bereaved person. In summary, based on the comments of the participants in this study, post-funeral rituals should be personally meaningful, attend to the bereaved's particular grief stage or tasks,

include emotional and spiritual elements, employ symbolic objects, include a component of remembrance, and include others that the bereaved has specifically chosen.

Based on the findings from this study, post-funeral rituals should be more widely encouraged as part of a routine bereavement process. Grief experts should actively promote the use of post-funeral rituals to facilitate bereavement. Rituals seem to be an exceptional tool for bereavement in that they can facilitate passage through each stage of the grief process. All the participants interviewed in this study said that any hesitation they may have had before undertaking a ritual is now absent. Accordingly, success is more likely if the bereaved participates in the construction of their ritual, even if they are initially reluctant. Also, all participants said that they are planning additional rituals and that they would encourage others to perform rituals. This emphatic endorsement from the bereaved themselves should strongly encourage grief experts to recommend the use of rituals to other grieving individuals.

This study was an exploratory examination of post-funeral rituals, designed to amass a wide variety of factors associated with how and why rituals seem to work. In light of this purpose and design, this study had some limitations. The small sample size, comprised exclusively of Caucasian adults, may limit the generalizability of the results to other populations. The self-report data obtained from the participants may not generalize to other grieving individuals. It is incumbent on the reader to determine the applicability of these findings to other populations or settings. Also, due to the qualitative design of this study, it is impossible to draw cause-and-effect relationships from the interview data. Participants unanimously described that their grief had improved. They typically

attributed this improvement to their post-funeral grief rituals. However, other factors (i.e., passage of time, spirituality, social support) may have been responsible for this improvement. Due to the qualitative self-report design, the effects of the rituals described by the participants cannot be statistically measured or validated, only described and understood.

Some comments from participants reflected the general limitations of post-funeral rituals. Some participants said that some rituals were not helpful and that at times, they gained very little from participating in a ritual. Others said that designing or performing a ritual was initially intimidating, while some said they were initially unsure what purpose a grief ritual might serve. While it is important to understand the limitations of rituals—they are not guaranteed panaceas for grief—it is equally important to understand that participants made these comments very infrequently and only when a particular ritual held no personal meaning for them.

Post-funeral rituals have been largely overlooked in the grief literature. Future directions for research could include increasing the generalizability of these findings by interviewing children, adolescents, and members of diverse backgrounds. Also, adult age differences may be important. “Baby boomers,” who have already altered traditional wedding and childbirth procedures and rituals, may be more likely to alter death rituals as well. Perhaps this age group is primed to explore novel post-funeral rituals in light of their disdain with traditional ceremonies. Quantitative research possibilities include statistically comparing the grief experiences of bereaved people who perform post-funeral rituals against bereaved people who do not, comparing the effectiveness of prescribed post-

funeral rituals with original ones, or measuring the effect of using rituals at particular grief stages to determine their maximal effectiveness.

Table 1
Summary of Post-Funeral Ritual Themes

Initial Thoughts about Rituals

Uncertainty about Ritual

Reasons for Performing Ritual
 Facilitation of grief tasks
 Remembrance
 Helping their children and families

Conditions for Successful Rituals

Personal Meaning
 Relevance to deceased
 Relevance to participant

Development and Planning of Rituals
 Origins of rituals
 Inclusion of others

Components of Rituals

Use of Symbolic Elements
Presence of Emotions
Presence of Spirituality
Meta-awareness of Performing Rituals

Outcomes of Rituals

Positive Impressions and Evaluations of Rituals

Life Changes
 Changes in perspectives
 Changes in grief processes
 Changes in themselves

Table 2
Frequency of Reported Emotions During Post-funeral Rituals

	<u>Number of times emotion reported</u>	<u>Number of participants reporting emotion at least once</u>
<u>Positive Emotions:</u>		
Good	39	9
Peace	25	10
Love	23	7
Comfort	22	6
Renewal / Less pain	17	8
Happiness	16	7
Helped	10	4
Fun	9	7
Reassurance/Togetherness	9	5
Hopeful	8	3

* Participants reported 51 other positive emotions; each reported less than 7 times.

Negative Emotions:

Sadness	20	6
Hard	12	5
Overwhelmed	5	4
Weird	5	3
Indifference	5	2
Anger	5	2
Loneliness	3	3

* Participants reported 12 other negative emotions; each reported less than 2 times.

<u>Conflicting Emotions:</u>	15	5
------------------------------	----	---

References

- Allan, G. (1991). Qualitative research. In G. Allan and C. Skinner (Eds.), Handbook for Research Students in the Social Sciences (pp.177-189). London: The Falmer Press.
- Attig, T. (1991). The importance of conceiving grief as an active process. Death Studies, 15, 385-393.
- Benoliel, J. Q. (1985). Loss and adaptation: Circumstances, contingencies, and consequences. Death Studies, 9, 217-233.
- Berg, B. L. (1989). Qualitative research methods for the social sciences. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bogdan, R. & Taylor, S. T. (1975). Introduction to qualitative research methods. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bolton, C., & Camp, D. J. (1989). The post-funeral ritual in bereavement counseling and grief work. Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 13, 49-59.
- Bowlby, J. (1961). Processes of mourning. International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 42, 317-340.
- Bowlby, J. (1980). Attachment and loss: Loss, sadness, and depression (Vol. III). New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- Cassem, N. H. (1976). The first three steps beyond the grave. In V. R. Pine, A. H. Kutcher, D. Peretz, R. C. Slater, R. DeBellis, R. J. Volk, & D. J. Cherico (Eds.), Acute grief and the funeral (pp. 13-22). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher.
- Danforth, L. M. (1982). The death rituals of rural Greece. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research (pp. 1-18). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Engel, G. (1964). Grief and grieving. American Journal of Nursing, 64, 93-98.

- Euster, G. L. (1991). Memorial contributions: Remembering the elderly deceased and supporting the bereaved. Omega, 23, 169-177.
- Feinstein, D., & Mayo, P. E. (1990). Rituals for living and dying: From life's wounds to spiritual awakening. San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins.
- Fitzgerald, H. (1994). The mourning handbook. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Freedman, S., & Pettus, S. (1995). Brief strategic interventions with families of adolescents. Family Therapy, 12, 197-210.
- Fulton, R. (1976). The traditional funeral and contemporary society. In V. R. Pine, A. H. Kutcher, D. Peretz, R. C. Slater, R. DeBellis, R. J. Volk, & D. J. Cherico (Eds.), Acute grief and the funeral (pp. 23-31). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher.
- Glaser, B. (1978). Theoretical sensitivity. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (1992). Basics of grounded theory analysis. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Goldberg, H. S. (1981-1982). Funeral and bereavement rituals of Kota Indians and Orthodox Jews. Omega, 12, 117-128.
- Griffith, E. E. H. (1983). The significance of ritual in a church-based healing model. American Journal of Psychiatry, 140, 568-573.
- Guba, E. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. Educational Research Information Center Annual Review Paper, 29, 75-91.
- Hardy, W. G. Jr. (1976). The adaptive funeral. In V. R. Pine, A. H. Kutcher, D. Peretz, R. C. Slater, R. DeBellis, R. J. Volk, & D. J. Cherico (Eds.), Acute grief and the funeral (pp. 131-138). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher.
- Horacek, B. J. (1995). A heuristic model of grieving after high-grief deaths. Death Studies, 19, 21-31.
- Hutchinson, S. (1987). Education and grounded theory. In R. R. Sherman and R. B. Webb (Eds.), Qualitative research in education: Focus and methods (pp. 123-140). New York: The Falmer Press.
- Irion, P. E. (1976). The funeral and the bereaved. In V. R. Pine, A. H. Kutcher, D. Peretz, R. C. Slater, R. DeBellis, R. J. Volk, & D. J. Cherico (Eds.), Acute grief and the funeral (pp. 32-40). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher.

- Irion, P. E. (1990-1991). Changing patterns of ritual response to death. Omega, 22, 159-172.
- James, J. W., & Cherry, F. (1988). The grief recovery handbook: A step-by-step program for moving beyond loss. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.
- Janesick, V. J. (1994). The dance of qualitative research design: Metaphor, methodolatry, and meaning. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research (pp. 209-219). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Janowiak, S. M., Mei-tal, R., & Drapkin, R. G. (1995). Living with loss: A group for bereaved college students. Death Studies, 19, 55-63.
- Jones, S. (1985). The analysis of depth interviews. In R. Walker (Ed.), Applied qualitative research (pp. 56-70). Hants, England: Gower Publishing Company Limited.
- Kafka, J. S. (1983). Challenge and confirmation in ritual action. Psychiatry, 46, 31-39.
- Kawaga-Singer, M. (1994). Diverse cultural beliefs and practices about death and dying in the elderly. Gerontological & Geriatrics Education, 15, 107-116.
- Kirk, J. & Miller, M. L. (1986). Reliability and validity in qualitative research. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Knox, S., Hess, S. A., Peterson, D. A., & Hill, C. E. (1997). A qualitative analysis of client perceptions of the effects of helpful therapist self-disclosure in long-term therapy. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 44, 274-283.
- Kollar, N. R. (1989). Rituals and the disenfranchised griever. In K. J. Doka, (Ed.) Disenfranchised grief: Recognizing hidden sorrow (pp.271-285). Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Krefting, L. (1990). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. The American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 45, 214-222.
- Kübler-Ross, E. (1969). On death and dying. New York, Macmillan.
- Lattanz, M., & Hale, M. E. (1984-1985). Giving grief words: Writing during bereavement. Omega, 15, 45-52.
- Leedy, P. (1997). Practical research. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Publishers.

- Leigh, D. R. (1984). Method of burial and its relationship to the intensity of widows' grief. Dissertation Abstracts International, 44, 3523-3524B.
- Lindemann, E. (1944). Symptomatology and management of acute grief. American Journal of Psychiatry, 101, 141-148.
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative data analysis. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Morse, J. M. (1994). Designing funded qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research (pp. 220-235). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Morton-Williams, J. (1985). Making qualitative research work—Aspects of administration. In R. Walker (Ed.), Applied qualitative research (pp. 27-42). Hants, England: Gower Publishing Company Limited.
- Myerhoff, B. (1984) Rites and signs of ripening: The intertwining of ritual, time, and growing older. In D. I. Kertzner & J. Keith (Eds.), Age and anthropological theory (pp. 305-330). London: Cornell University Press.
- Parkes, C. M. (1972). Bereavement: Studies of grief in adult life. New York: International Universities Press.
- Parkes, C. M. (1970). "Seeking" and "finding" a lost object: Evidence from recent studies of the reaction to bereavement. Social Science and Medicine, 4, 187-201.
- Parkes, C.M., & Weiss, R. S. (1983). Recovery from bereavement. New York: Basic Books.
- Patton, M. Q. (1980). Qualitative evaluation methods. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rando, T. A. (1984). Grief, dying, and death: Clinical interventions for caregivers. Champaign, IL: Research Press, Inc.
- Rando, T. A. (1985). Creating therapeutic rituals in the psychotherapy of the bereaved. Psychotherapy, 22, 236-240.
- Rando, T. A. (1988). Grieving: How to go on living when someone you love dies. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company.

- Raphael, B. (1982). The anatomy of bereavement. New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- Raphael, B., Middleton, W., Martinek, N., & Misso, V. (1993). Counseling and therapy of the bereaved. In M. S. Stroebe, W. Stroebe, & R. O. Hansson, (Eds.) Handbook of bereavement (pp. 427-453). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reeves, N. C. (1990). Ritual as a psychotherapeutic intervention for unresolved grief: A phenomenological mapping. Dissertation Abstracts International, 50, 2390A.
- Reeves, N. C., & Boersma, F. J. (1989-1990). The therapeutic use of ritual in maladaptive grieving. Omega, 20, 281-291.
- Rodabough, T. (1981). How we know about death: Research strategies. Death Education, 4, 315-336.
- Rosenblatt, P. C., Jackson, D. A., & Walsh, R. P. (1972). Coping with anger and aggression in mourning. Omega, 4, 271-281.
- Rosenblatt, P. C., Walsh, R. P., & Jackson, D. A. (1976). Grief and mourning: In cross-cultural perspective. USA: HRAF Press.
- Rubin, S. S. (1985). the resolution of bereavement: A clinical focus on the relationship to the deceased. Psychotherapy, 22, 231-235.
- Sanders, C. M. (1992). Surviving grief and learning to live again. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Sankar, A. (1991). Ritual and dying: A cultural analysis of social support for caregivers. Gerontologist, 31, 43-50.
- Scuchter, S. R., & Zisook, S. (1993). The course of normal grief. In M. S. Stroebe, W. Stroebe, & R. O. Hansson, (Eds.), Handbook of bereavement (pp. 23-43). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Siggins, L. D. (1983). Psychoanalysis and ritual. Psychiatry, 46, 2-15.
- Spiegel, D., & Yalom, I. D. (1978). A support group for dying patients. International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, 28, 233-245.
- Strauss, A. (1987). Qualitative analysis for social scientists. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology: An overview. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research (pp. 273-285). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Tesch, R. (1990). Qualitative research: Analysis types and software tools. London: The Falmer Press.
- Tong, C. (1987). Dangerous blood, refined souls: Death rituals among the Chinese in Singapore. Dissertation Abstracts International, 48, 971-972A.
- van der Hart, O. (1988). An imaginary leave-taking ritual in mourning therapy: A brief communication. The International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, 36, 63-69.
- van der Hart, O., & Goossens, F. A. (1987). Leave-taking rituals in mourning therapy. Israeli Journal of Psychiatry, 24, 87-98.
- van Gannep, A. (1960). The rites of passage. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Wallerstein, J. S., & Blakeslee, S. (1990). Second chances: Men, women, and children a decade after divorce. New York: Ticknor and Fields.
- Weizman, S. G., & Kamm, P. (1985). About mourning: Support and guidance for the bereaved. New York: Human Sciences Press, Inc.
- Wellenkamp, J. C. (1985). A psychocultural study of loss and death among the Toraja. Dissertation Abstracts International, 45, 3396A.
- Whitaker, L. C. (1985). Visiting the parental grave in psychotherapy. Psychotherapy, 22, 141-147.
- Worden, J. W. (1991). Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner. New York: Springer Publishing, Co.
- Zuesse, E. M. (1983). The absurdity of ritual. Psychiatry, 46, 40-50.

Appendix A

Limitations of the Traditional Funeral Ritual

Although the funeral is a vital and effective tool for grieving, its limits leave room for additional techniques to be of use after the funeral is completed. This appendix will focus on the strengths and limitations of the traditional funeral ritual on adjustment to bereavement.

Strengths of the Funeral

The funeral is widely regarded as an important, crucial event for most grieving individuals in the US. Just as most cultures have some sort of grief ritual to signify a person's death (Cassem, 1976; Rosenblatt, Walsh, & Jackson, 1976), the U.S. uses the funeral ritual as a typical way to mark the passing of a loved one and signify the beginning of the grief process for the survivors (Irion, 1976). The funeral is widely regarded as vital for facilitating the beginning stages of grief (Cassem, 1976; Sanders, 1992). Funerals help overcome denial by forcing the survivors to accept the deceased's body. The funeral helps survivors accept the death event and begin to express their feelings in a public acknowledgement of their grief (Irion, 1976; Kawaga-Singer, 1994; Kollar, 1989). The funeral is especially effective in encouraging these grief processes to occur. By seeing the body in the casket, offering a memorial and eulogy, focusing on the death event as final

and irreversible, and gathering social support, the survivors find a safe and compassionate environment with which to start their grief process in earnest.

Limitations of the Funeral

Despite these exceedingly positive effects, the funeral is limited in its lasting, direct effect on the grief process of the survivors (Hardy, 1976). There are typically no funeral-like, ritualistic events that occur after the funeral to facilitate the grief of the bereaved. Most authors agree that while the funeral is adept for handling the beginning stages of grief—acceptance and expression of emotion—it is less productive in processing later stages such as adjustment and reinvestment (Irion, 1976). In fact, some suggest the funeral's role is limited in expressing feelings; Irion (1976) writes that while the funeral encourages emotions to be expressed, it does not help the survivor make sense of those feelings. Feelings may be stirred up by the funeral but the person may need time to understand them. Funerals typically occur shortly after the death event. This does not provide enough processing time for the survivor to begin working through adjustment and reinvestment or perhaps even acceptance or expression of feelings (Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990). It is not a shortcoming of the funeral; the funeral is simply not designed to deal with all aspects of grief.

The Importance of Post-Funeral Rituals

Post-funeral rituals are ideal for filling this gap in the grief process. Where funerals leave off, post-funeral rituals can begin. They can be used for any stage of the grief process that is occurring after the funeral, ranging from acceptance to reinvestment. For example, if the survivor missed the funeral, they may need to do something to

symbolize and reinforce their acceptance of the death—roles the funeral would have played. Grief is ongoing and post-funeral rituals can help facilitate later stages as well. It is important to examine the role that post-funerals can play in affecting positive adjustment to bereavement after the benefits of the funeral have been fully realized.

Appendix B

Theories and Models of Grief

This appendix will outline the major models of grief that have been proposed since Lindemann's seminal model of 1944. Grief models can be categorized into task models and stage models. Task models emphasize the activities that a bereaved person must do in order to complete their grief; stage models outline the progressive stages that occur in typical bereavement. The three major task models will be presented first, followed by the more common stage models. Much of the following material has been condensed from the original sources and from Rando's comprehensive overview of grief models (1984). After describing the different models, a synthesis of the major themes of the models will be presented.

Lindemann's Three-task Model of Grief Work

Erich Lindemann developed his theory of grief work (1944) after the Cocoanut Grove fire in Boston in 1944. The theory has been incorporated into several current theories (Parkes & Weiss, 1983; Worden, 1991). Lindemann's theory is the seminal grief theory which opened the door for further grief research.

There are three tasks in Lindemann's theory of grief work: emancipation from the bondage of the deceased, readjustment to the environment in which the deceased is missing, and formation of new relationships.

- **Emancipation from the bondage of the deceased:** This task centers around the need for decathexis. The emotional attachment and investment in the deceased needs to begin to be shifted to other relationships. The survivor must begin to withdraw the emotional energy that was put into the person while they were alive. As Irion (1976) describes, there needs to be “movement along a continuum from a relationship of presence (i.e., living, responsive relationship) to a relationship of memory.” Rando (1984) describes this task as “untying the ties that bind” the survivor to the deceased. According to Rando, the survivor must detach and modify emotional ties so that new relationships have the potential to be established and the mourner does not feel tied to someone who is no longer alive. It is important to remember that the deceased is not forgotten or betrayed; instead, the relationship with the deceased is merely altered so that the relationship energies begin to move into other relationships. The energy that was put into the relationship while the person was alive is transferred to relationships in which the energy can be reciprocated.

- **Readjustment to the environment in which the deceased is missing:** Two main tasks are required in this process. First, the survivor must begin to assume new roles and responsibilities that were not required before the death of their loved one. Chores and duties that were performed by the deceased must now be performed by the survivor. This may necessitate learning of new skills and gathering information as to how to make life run smoothly without the loved one. Second, the survivor’s sense of identity must be changed to reflect these changes. A woman will shift from “wife” to “widow,” a man from “husband” to “widower.” Difficult emotional work must be done to complete this

task, as it is very difficult to assume these new roles that are largely unwanted. In a basic way, the survivor must adjust to the reality of their new life as it has been changed by the death of their loved one.

- Formation of new relationships: The energy that was “emancipated” from the relationship with the deceased must now be transferred to new relationships. The first task allowed for the energy to be released; this task encourages that the energy be put to use in other relationships. A husband may begin to date, reconnect with old friends, or spend more time with his family. The energy that had maintained the old relationship will now go into initiating and maintaining other relationships. Again, the deceased is not forgotten; however, the relationship with the deceased is inexorably altered in fundamental ways.

Worden's Four-task Model

Worden's theory (1991) draws heavily from Lindemann's 1944 theory of grief work. Worden published his theory in 1982; since then, it has undergone mild revisions up to the most recent 1991 version. It is a task-based model of grief. Like Lindemann, Worden stresses the need for activities to be done rather than stages be endured. He writes, “The mourner sees the concept of phases [stages] as something to be passed through, while the tasks approach gives the mourner some sense of leverage and hope that there is something that he or she can actively do” (1991).

Worden writes that resolution of grief is dependent on completion of the following four tasks: accepting the reality of the loss, working through the pain of grief, adjusting to

an environment in which the deceased is missing, and emotionally relocating the deceased and moving on with life.

- Accepting the reality of the loss: This task emphasizes the importance of realizing at a conscious level that the death is final and that a reunion with the deceased is impossible. It is a complete acceptance of the death. The survivor must understand that the person is “dead and will not return” (Worden, 1991). Worden describes several impediments to the completion of this task, including denial of the irreversibility of the loss, mummification of the deceased’s valuables, and denial of the meaning of the loss.

- Working through the pain of the loss: Worden describes that the survivor must acknowledge and experience the physical, emotional, and behavioral pain associated with death. He reiterates sentiments from Parkes (1972) when he asserts that grief will be prolonged and complicated if the pain is not recognized and felt. This task is sometimes made more difficult because of society’s discomfort with displays of emotions.

- Adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing: This task requires that the survivor begin to adapt to their new life without the loved one. This task typically emerges around three months after the death and can take several different courses, depending on the relationship to the loved one. Survivors may need to develop new skills, take on roles formerly performed by the deceased, adjust to their own sense of self-identity, examine their fundamental life values, and find meaning in the death.

Worden describes this task as exceptionally crucial, yet especially difficult as well. He explains that it is common for people in this stage to feel “helpless, inadequate, incapable,

childlike, or personally bankrupt,” which can lead to a lower sense of self-esteem and personal efficacy (Worden, 1991).

- Emotionally relocating the deceased and moving on with life: This involves finding an appropriate place for the deceased in the bereaved’s emotional life. The goal is to be able to function and go on living effectively. It is important to remember that the survivor is not forgetting the deceased—only evolving a different type of relationship with them so that the energy that went into preserving an ongoing relationship with them is now put into other areas. Worden states that this task is typically the most difficult for complete; however, it is perhaps the most critical for someone in that it allows for other relationships to be fostered and maintained.

Parkes and Weiss’ Three-task Model

Parkes and Weiss (1983) developed a task model based on their earlier work in the area of grief and loss. The three tasks necessary for grief resolution are intellectual recognition and explanation of the loss, emotional acceptance of the loss, and assumption of a new identity.

- Intellectual recognition and explanation of the loss: This task emphasizes the importance for the survivor to fully understand the death event. They must understand what caused the death and know as much as possible about the death itself. This helps the griever relieve their anxiety about that type of death event repeating itself for themselves.

- Emotional acceptance of the loss: The griever, after an initial period of detachment and rest from the emotional pain of the loss, must confront the pain of

mourning. They begin to remember memories, feel their emotions fully, and review their thoughts of the deceased. The survivor eventually reaches a point at which the emotional pain begins to subside even when remembering the same painful memories.

- Assumption of a new identity: Grievors must adjust to a new world without the deceased. According to Parkes and Weiss, this involves crafting a new identity which takes into account the differences between the life that was and the life that now is. The authors caution that the process may be slow and arduous, typically halting or regressing in its course of general forward progress.

Lindemann's Three-stage Model

Lindemann also created a stage model of grief at the same time he introduced his task model. The two are based on his surveys from the Cocoanut Grove Fire in 1944 and are therefore similar in theory. However, this stage model focuses on description of the grief process rather than what needs to be done by the bereaved in order to resolve the grief. His stages of grief include shock and disbelief, acute mourning, and resolution.

- Shock and disbelief: Typically this involves the inability to accept the loss. The survivor must come to a point in which they accept and understand that the death is final. Occasionally, this stage involves an absolute denial that the death has even occurred. In this case, it is obviously necessary to accept the event of death before one can accept the finality and ramifications of the loss in general.

- Acute mourning: This involves the behaviors and feelings associated with an acceptance of the loss. A person may lose interest in daily affairs, lose their appetite, become isolated, feel lonely, weep frequently, become fatigued, and have trouble sleeping.

Also common in this stage is a preoccupation with the image of the deceased. The survivor may hear their voice or believe that they see the loved one in a crowd well after the death has occurred.

- Resolution: This stage typifies the emergence of the survivor back into normal life. They will enter into daily activities that were common before the death occurred and they will perform some of the same roles that were typical for them. Also, along with this tendency to get on with normal life is a decrease in the preoccupation with the image of the deceased. It is as if they are moving on with life without the deceased.

Parkes and Bowlby

Bowlby (1961) developed a stage theory of grief that was based on his attachment theory. His attachment theory posits that people attempt to maintain affective bonds with others. When that person dies, the attachment is still real and dictates the response of the survivor's grief process. At first the person cries, then they become angry, and finally they begin searching for the deceased—all unconscious attempts to reattach to the deceased. He created a model which incorporated these behaviors, along with later stages of grief that occur when these behaviors are not successful in reattaching the survivor with the deceased. Parkes (1970) revised the theory, adding a primary phase of numbness to the model. Bowlby (1980) later endorsed the revision. The model now incorporates the initial phase of numbness with the original phases of yearning and searching, disorganization and despair, and reorganization.

- Phase of numbness: This is the initial stage of feeling stunned and surprised after learning of the death. Parkes (1970) realized that Bowlby had made reference to this

phenomenon but had neglected to give it the appropriate significance. Feeling shocked and numb is common. Occasionally, varying degrees of denial are present as well.

- Phase of yearning and searching: The person behaves in such a way as to satisfy the “urge to recover the lost object” (Bowlby, 1961). Searching is an active, behavioral process. The griever is restless, preoccupied with thoughts of the deceased, perceives images of the loved one in crowds, spends time in places or with objects associated with the deceased, and calls for the loved one. Emotionally, the griever becomes angry and irritable at the fruitless nature of these behaviors.

- Phase of disorganization and despair: The survivor eventually realizes that reattaching with the deceased is impossible. As a result, they give up searching for the deceased. This is typically synonymous with feelings of depression and despair. Bowlby (1980) states, “Sooner or later, some of those who avoid all conscious grieving, break down—usually with some form of depression.” These feelings are often accompanied by a feeling of hopelessness for the future and a failure to see any meaningful purpose in life.

- Phase of reorganization: This stage involves a gradual breaking down of attachments to the deceased. The person gives up yearning and has stopped searching, instead going on with the routines of daily life. This is not an easy stage to navigate. Parkes (1972) writes, “In any bereavement, it is seldom clear exactly what is lost. A loss of a husband, for instance, may or may not mean the loss of a sexual partner, companion, accountant, gardener, baby minder, audience, bed warmer, and so on.” Bowlby (1980) describes the importance of this stage in that it determines whether someone will grow

from the experience or continue to be “held prisoner by a dilemma he cannot solve.”

There is an eventual return of interests and physical behaviors that were lost or suspended in earlier stages. Grief is resolved when this stage is finished.

Engel's Six-stage Model

Engel's 1964 model is based on a proposition that grief is a healing process. If the healing process is stunted, complicated grief will result. Grief can become complicated by poor interventions in grief, inadequate conditions for healing, or a lack of individual coping resources. His sequence for stages for normal grief processes includes shock and disbelief, developing awareness, restitution, resolving the loss, idealization, and the outcome.

- Shock and disbelief: In this initial stage, the griever is shocked by the loss. The bereaved commonly denies the loss. They become numb and avoid painful feelings commonly associated with such a stunning loss.

- Developing awareness: The reality of the loss becomes undeniable. The awareness of the finality and irreversibility of the death is often an acute phenomenon that is frequently accompanied by feelings of anguish. Anger and guilt are common. The survivor may begin to act out impulsively or destructively. Crying is normal and is significantly related to positive grief resolution, particularly since it may gather social support.

- Restitution: This stage involves the funeral ritual. The funeral is designed to help initiate recovery from the earlier stages of grief. The funeral ritual facilitates coping with the loss by stimulating emotional expression, forcing acceptance of the death, and gathering social support. Personal religious beliefs are also important in this stage.

- Resolving the loss: During this stage, the survivor feels a tremendous void left by the loss of the loved one. In an attempt to deal with this perceived lack of wholeness, the survivor is preoccupied with the deceased. They remember the actual death event and the personal experience of the loss, and later focus on the deceased as a person. They consistently review and discuss the deceased and their relationship with them.

- Idealization: During this stage, the deceased is regarded in an unrealistically positive light. All negative and hostile feelings are suppressed. Feelings of guilt, remorse, and responsibility for their death surface. The preoccupation begins to wane after these feelings have been experienced for some time. The negative feelings begin to diminish and the identification with the deceased's qualities and aspirations begins to become stronger. They move on to an interest in new relationships and to continuing the ideals of the loved one.

- The outcome: This is the resolution of the death, in which the deceased is remembered in positive and negative ways in a comfortable and realistic manner.

Kübler-Ross' Five-stage Model

Much has been written about the model proposed by Kübler-Ross (1969). The theory became a worldwide standard for grief and loss. Her model was developed after she analyzed numerous interviews that she conducted with dying patients.

Unfortunately, many therapists and medical personnel, as well as lay persons, began believing that her theory was inflexible and expected dying people and the bereaved to complete each step in sequence before moving on to the next stage. Taken with more flexibility, however, this model has been very helpful for thousands of people. The

stages of her model include denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

- Denial and isolation: This is the initial stage in which the griever feels a sense of shock and disbelief that the death event has occurred. It serves as a buffer against the overwhelming reality at hand. The survivor is able to function after the death event because the denial helps the person go on with life in the face of trauma. These defenses eventually decrease in intensity and movement through other stages is possible.

- Anger: The griever often goes through a period of intense and sometimes diffuse anger. The anger can be directed at God, the death event, the deceased, other events or people who were involved with the death, or themselves. At times anger is imbued with a sense of guilt or resentment.

- Bargaining: The griever will frequently undertake a new defense—bargaining—in order to stall or deny the death event. This stage is most clearly seen in the dying process before the death occurs, yet it is also common in bereavement as well. The survivor will attempt to plea bargain with God or others to try and make the event reverse itself or make the grief go away.

- Depression: Often the survivor becomes depressed after a length of time in their grief. The depression can be acute or gradual and varies in its intensity and duration.

- Acceptance: The final stage in her model, resolution occurs when the death is fully accepted. There are no more attempts to deny the death or bargain away the grief. The loss is understood as final and permanent.

Rando's Three-stage Theory of Psychological Manifestations

Rando (1985) drew upon her many years as a psychological researcher to develop her theory. This theory gives more weight to the psychological implications of grief on the survivor. Her theory is inclusive and focuses heavily on the emotional aspects of grief. The phases include avoidance, confrontation, and reestablishment.

- Avoidance: This phase includes the psychological defenses of shock, denial, and disbelief. Initially, the survivor will react with shock upon learning of the death. The person may be numb, dazed, and confused immediately after news of the death. Denial occurs after the shock wears off, keeping the survivor from becoming overwhelmed by the reality of the situation. Rando (1985) describes denial as “emotional anesthesia.” Disbelief is also common, keeping the person somewhat detached from the anguish of the death. Confusion and disorganization are often common.

- Confrontation: During this phase, the feelings of grief are at their most intense and acute. Extremes of emotions are felt (but not necessarily expressed). A wide range of emotions is common, including sadness, anger, guilt, indifference, hostility, panic, anxiety, worthlessness, bitterness, disillusionment, depression, despair, irritability, denial, relief, and fear. People search for a way to navigate this difficult stage, often trying to find meaning or becoming preoccupied with the deceased in an attempt to understand the death. She describes this stage as being especially difficult to get through because of the lack of societal models or prescribed roles for mourners.

- Reestablishment: Rando (1985) writes, “This stage constitutes a gradual decline of grief and marks the beginning of the emotional and social reentry back into the

everyday world.” The loss is put into a different perspective which allows the survivor to go on with their new life while at the same time not forgetting the special importance of the deceased. This process often accompanies feelings of guilt for moving on with life or forming new relationships or interests. Finally, this phase (like the others) is a gradual stage in which spurts of growth are surrounded by a more ordinary trudging through the pain of grief.

Synthesis of the Grief Models

Most of these grief models seem to resemble each other in many fundamental ways. Each has a clear progression of tasks or stages that are common, depending on the amount of time and energy put into the grieving process. Each has a formula that is necessary for resolving grief. Perhaps of more interest is that apart from the structural similarities of the models, the models retain a theoretical commonality as well. These models can be integrated into one meta-model with the following stages or tasks: denial, acceptance, feeling the loss, adjustment, and reinvestment.

- Denial: Four of the theories outlined above discuss denial as the primary stage in grief. Denial includes feeling the emotions of shock, surprise, disbelief, and being stunned. Denial also incorporates the behaviors of yearning and searching for the deceased and becoming preoccupied with seeing images of the deceased. Denial is often seen as a positive defense mechanism which buffers the overwhelming nature of grief. Denial is typically short-lived and moves quickly into the next stage of acceptance.

- Acceptance: The second meta-stage, acceptance, helps overcome the presence of denial. In this stage, griever's accept the reality of the loss. They understand the finality

and irreversibility of the loss. They stop searching for the deceased and begin to accept and focus on their own grief. They understand at a core level that they have changed and separated from the life they once knew while the loved one was still alive. Acceptance of the death is found in each model. In some models, it is the first stage; in Kübler-Ross' model, it is the final stage. It seems theoretically sound that denial and acceptance are closely related and may even assume one all-inclusive and primary stage that requires acceptance of the death as its outcome.

- Feeling the loss: Six models discuss the importance of feeling the emotions that center around the loss. Crying and expressions of anger are seen as the most frequent emotional displays. Feelings that are common at this stage are sadness, anger, guilt, resentment, relief, frustration, fear, depression, anxiety, emptiness, and incompleteness. Authors explain that almost every feeling imaginable is occasionally felt. They also discuss the importance of expressing these feelings and that not expressing emotions frequently leads to complications in grieving.

- Adjustment: The stage or task of adjustment is found in six models. It includes adjusting to a new environment in which the deceased is missing. This can take the form of learning new skills, adopting new roles, and reentering into daily activities of life. It also involves breaking the ties with the deceased so that the relationship with the deceased is altered and attachments begin to break. This stage represents a transition phase in which the survivor has accepted and felt the loss and is moving into a new form and phase of their life. Many authors discuss the difficulty of completing this stage.

- **Reinvestment:** Reinvestment is discussed in six models. This stage requires that the griever reinvest emotional energy that was found in the relationship with the deceased into other relationships. The griever understands that the energy that was put into maintaining an active relationship with the loved one must begin to be transferred to other relationships because their relationship with the deceased has been fundamentally altered. This stage also includes fostering new relationships, spurring new interests and activities, and returning interest to old activities. At this point, the griever is able to recollect positives and negatives about the deceased in a comfortable and easy way. This stage represents the theme of incorporation into a new state of being. Life has changed because of the death and the survivor is moving on and putting some emotional closure on their grief. Authors stressed the difficulty of this task and yet emphasized the critical nature of completing this stage to achieve complete grief resolution.

Appendix C

Defining and illustrating ritual

Definitions and examples for post-funeral rituals are common. This appendix will provide general and grief-specific definitions of ritual. It will also explore certain conditions which clinicians feel are important for success, as well as provide numerous Western and cross-cultural examples of rituals.

Definitions

Ritual is defined by Rando (1985, 1988) as a “specific behavior or activity which gives symbolic expression to certain feelings and thoughts of the actors individually or as a group.” Similarly, ritual has been defined as “a ceremony with special meaning that is out of the ordinary” (Reeves & Boersma, 1988-1989). This definition of ritual does not reflect a pathological symptom found in clinical obsessive-compulsive disorders but rather a healthy symbolic act. Specifically related to grief, rituals are “formalized symbolic acts by means of which the survivor can take leave of the person no longer there” (van der Hart & Goossens, 1987). An inclusive definition of ritual in general is provided by the anthropologist Myerhoff (1984):

Ritual inevitably carries a basic message of order, continuity, and predictability. New events are connected to preceding ones, incorporated into a stream of precedents so that they are recognized as growing out of tradition and experience. By stating enduring and underlying patterns, ritual connects past, present, and future, abrogating history and time. Ritual always links participants

to one another and often beyond, to wider collectivities that may be present...and when rituals employ sacred symbols, they may link the celebrants to their very selves, throughout the stages of the life cycle, making individual history into a continuum, a single phenomenological reality.

Ritual is generally seen as a special ceremonial experience that represents different layers of meaning symbolized by the overt actions of the ritual.

One of the crucial aspects of the ritual is the concept of symbolism. Certain actions may be seen by some as common, everyday behaviors and as ritualistic actions by others. The difference between the two is the symbolism of deeper meaning; those who attach deeper meaning to the action will see the behavior as more ritualistic and out of the ordinary. For example, two bereaved people may empty the closets of the deceased three weeks after the death. The first may see it simply as a necessary duty. The second may see the closet-cleaning as symbolically representative of their progress through grief. The location, frequency, pattern, order, or time of the events comprising the ritual are important only as far as the symbolic meaning is attached to it. Otherwise, the action is simply commonplace behavior.

Individualized

Most writers express strong sentiment that the ritual should be individually tailored to the needs of the grieving person and not prescribed as a generic therapeutic technique (Irion, 1990-1991; Rando, 1985; Rosenblatt, et. al, 1976; Siggins, 1983).

Clinicians state that rituals need to be personally meaningful to the survivor if they are to be effective at producing any significant progress in the grief process (Cassem, 1976; James & Cherry, 1988; Raphael, et. al, 1993; Rosenblatt, et. al, 1976). Rituals should be

relevant to the bereaved (Hardy, 1976) and designed based on the needs of that person rather than the “normal” stages the person might be expected to be going through (Rando, 1985). Hardy (1976) and Rando (1984) both encourage therapists to take the client’s demographic and historical factors—age, ethnicity, relationship to the deceased, the death event—into account when assisting them in creating their own grief ritual. The post-funeral ritual serves as a symbolic representation of their grief process; therefore, the ritual must be personally meaningful if it is to have the desired impact.

Necessary Factors of the Griever

Some factors are thought to be important for bereaved persons to have in order for the ritual to be effective. Most authors assert that the survivor must have an appropriate distance from their grief in order to handle the emotionally powerful stimuli raised by the ritual (Benoliel, 1985; Bolton & Camp, 1989; Kafka, 1983; Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990; van der Hart, 1988; Whitaker, 1985). If the person is still immediately and intensely impacted by the death event or by memories of the deceased, other grief work should be accomplished before attempting to carry out a post-funeral ritual (James & Cherry, 1988). Despite this advice, authors are unclear as to what constitutes an appropriate amount of distance from their grief. Definitions of appropriate distance include being able to express emotions easily (Benoliel, 1985), being empathic to others (Benoliel, 1985), being flexible (Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990), being committed to adjustment (Feinstein & Mayo, 1990; Rosenblatt, et. al, 1976), or being psychologically and emotionally strong (Bolton & Camp, 1989). However, even these more specific definitions are vague and unclear. It seems that authors agree that some amount of

distance should be present before a ritual is undertaken; they are more unclear as to how to define or measure this distance.

Necessary Factors of the Ritual

Clinicians have also outlined what they believe should be present in the ritual in order for it to deliver its benefits. However, they usually emphasize very different parts of the ritual as the critical elements. Some suggest it should be public and involve others (Benoliel, 1985; Rosenblatt, et. al, 1976; Zuesse, 1983). Others emphasize that the ritual should alter time and should take on a magical feel, floating between reality and fantasy (Myerhoff, 1984; Siggins, 1983). Others say the ritual should not alter time but instead be time-limited and time-bound (Kafka, 1983). Kafka also states that the crucial element of ritual is that it concerns transcendence of the physical body and the boundary between the individual and society. Otto van der Hart (1988) says that the ritual should focus on the changes that are occurring in the relationship between the survivor and the deceased. Some say the ritual should focus on hope (Feinstein & Mayo, 1990), while others describe the important pieces as making the deceased seem alive and confirming the survivor's own life (Kollar, 1989). Rando (1984) asserts that the post-funeral ritual should symbolize the transition, healing, and continuity. Others focus on the future, saying the ritual should set in motion what has not happened internally (Raphael, et. al, 1993). It seems clear that while many people have written what rituals should encompass, there is little agreement among their guidelines.

Western Examples of Rituals

The following list provides a long list of types of rituals that are described in the literature. The list is not exhaustive; an infinite number of actions could be described as rituals depending on how the action was symbolically perceived. However, the following examples encompass many of the most popular rituals.

- Writing a letter to the deceased (Bolton & Camp, 1989; James & Cherry, 1988; van der Hart, 1988; van der Hart & Goossens, 1987).
- Presenting a ceremonial meal (Bolton & Camp, 1989; van der Hart, 1988; van der Hart & Goossens, 1987).
- Holding a memorial service (Schucter & Zisook, 1993).
- Visiting the gravesite (Schucter & Zisook, 1993; Whitaker, 1985).
- Letting go of balloons (Rando, 1985).
- Planting a tree or taking a vacation (Rando, 1988).
- Creating a photo album or scrapbook (Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990).
- Lighting candles or playing special music (Rando, 1985; Rando, 1988).
- Gathering social support (Sankar, 1991).
- Putting away “leave-taking” or linking items (van der Hart, 1988).
- Creating a memorial site (Leigh, 1984).
- Saying goodbye (James & Cherry, 1988; Feinstein & Mayo, 1990).
- Invoking a special prayer (Griffith, 1983).
- Reprioritizing linking objects (Raphael, Middleton, Martinek, & Misso, 1993).
- Cleaning closets (Bolton & Camp, 1989).

- Taking a cleansing shower (van der Hart & Goossens, 1987).
- Creative visualization, meditating, saying a mantra, dancing, writing in a journal, creating sound or music, or drawing (Feinstein & Mayo, 1990).
- Engaging in therapeutic modalities such as family therapy or Gestalt techniques (Freidman & Pettus, 1985; Raphael, et al., 1993).
- Writing thank-you cards or taking off the wedding ring (Bolton & Camp, 1989).
- Creating or contributing to a memorial contribution (Euster, 1991).
- Creative writing (Lattanz & Hale, 1984-1985).
- Acknowledging holidays and anniversaries (James & Cherry, 1988; Kollar, 1989).
- Holding social gatherings or taking pilgrimages to a special place (Kollar, 1989).
- Designing religious rituals (Weizman & Kamm, 1985).
- Wearing jewelry of the deceased (Rando, 1988).
- Drying the funeral flowers (Rando, 1985).

It is important to remember that this list is by no means inclusive of all the rituals that are possible. Ritual is a highly personalized experience that is likely to be unique for each individual, making any number of symbolic actions potentially ritualistic.

Rituals are World-wide

Rituals, including post-funeral rituals, are typically found throughout most cultures in the world (Cassem, 1976; Rando, 1984). Rituals are the norm instead of the exception. Rituals are widespread and considered important in both religious and secular

aspects of life in different cultures and are used for several different life themes and events (Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990).

Rosenblatt, Walsh, & Jackson (1976) found that rituals are commonly used around the world to facilitate the death process. They write that more than 75% of societies with death ceremonies incorporate post-funeral rituals. Also, 25% of those societies which use post-funeral rituals perform a series of rituals and 35% use rituals to mark the end of the mourning period. It is clear that most societies that use death ceremonies of some sort find rituals to be a vital part of the grief process and that many utilize post-funeral rituals throughout the grief process. Also, most cultures around the world use ritual specialists, typically religious leaders, to help the bereaved in that society grieve effectively (Rosenblatt, Jackson, & Walsh, 1972). Post-funeral rituals are usually performed to facilitate transition and closure in the grief process—further evidence that rituals are considered important throughout the grief process (Raphael, 1982; van Gannep, 1960). Finally, cultures which employ post-funeral rituals have lower incidences of suicide, illness, disturbance in functioning, and prolonged grief than other societies (Raphael, 1982).

Cross-cultural Rituals

There are cross-cultural examples of post-funeral ritual that cover nearly every aspect of the grief process. It is impossible to list them all; however, a few will be highlighted to demonstrate how post-funeral rituals are most commonly used throughout the world.

Examples of rituals that help facilitate the stages of acceptance of the death and experiencing the pain that follows are numerous. Death and burial rites seem to extend back from the Neanderthal age through more modern societies, including Egypt, India, Kenya, and Java (Fulton, 1976). The funeral is perhaps the most well known (Cassem, 1976; Irion, 1976) but several other rituals are found worldwide. Burial rites are most common. Rural Greek cultures bury the body with great expressions of lamentation (Danforth, 1982). Orthodox Jewish societies also bury the body with loud wailing and crying (Kawaga-Singer, 1994). Conversely, many Asian cultures do not outwardly express their pain but instead present a solemn demeanor at the funeral (Kawaga-Singer, 1994). The Tolgnu Aboriginal tribe of Australia use ritual to curtail anger directly after the death (Raphael, 1982). The Yokut, a Native American tribe, restricts the survivors from washing, eating meat, and participating in social activities in order to demonstrate the pain of the loss (Rosenblatt, et al., 1976). Another tribe, the Kota, use two ceremonies after the death to bury the deceased and express their anguish (Goldberg, 1981-1982). It is well-known that Christian and Western societies are unique in that their grief process is short and formalized as compared to other societies (Kawaga-Singer, 1994).

The use of ritual to facilitate the transition phase is also well-documented in cross-cultural studies. In Singapore, the Chinese utilize ritual to symbolize their new identity and their increased unity as a family after a death (Tong, 1987). The Toraja tribe of Indonesia exhume the body after one year to hold the remains and memorialize the deceased (Wellenkamp, 1985). Survivors in rural Greece also exhume the body and use

the extent of decomposition of the body to determine how much grief they will continue to feel (Danforth, 1982). The Kota tribe uses a memorial service once a year to memorialize all of the deaths of the previous year (Goldberg, 1981-1982). Other tribes use feasts and other rituals to mark the roles and functions of widows and widowers in the tribal community (Rosenblatt, et al., 1976). The rituals last for eleven days and are quite complex. During this period, the widows of the deceased are given new roles in the community to facilitate transition. Orthodox Jews use the time of Sheloshim, thirty days after the funeral, to begin to transition back into more active and social roles (Goldberg, 1981-1982).

Rituals are also commonly used to mark the final period of mourning and the closure that eventually comes in the grief process. In Nigeria, after about a period of five months, the widow comes out of mourning and is given gifts of new clothes and jewelry and food to represent her new life and the end of her grief (Rosenblatt, et al., 1976). The Sa'dan Toraja in Indonesia use rituals after one year to symbolize attachment versus separation resolution and allow the survivors to move on (Wellenkamp, 1985). The Tolgnu tribe in Australia uses ritual several months after the death to "give time to grieve and time to live" (Raphael, 1982). In the Kota tribe, during the annual memorial service for the dead, a pot is smashed to symbolize the departure of the dead for the "Motherland" and consequently the return of the bereaved to their old lives and roles (Goldberg, 1981-1982). Judaism recognizes that grief lasts forever; Yahrzeit is observed by lighting a candle which burns for 24 hours on the anniversary of the death of the loved one and on certain holidays (Goldberg, 1981-1982). The Trobriand tribe cuts the hair off

of the widow after several months of isolation and reintroduces her to society (Sanders, 1992). In rural Greece, the deceased's exhumed bones are brought back to the village, greeted, and reburied; at this time, the family can rejoin the community in full (Danforth, 1982). In Latino/Latina cultures, the Dios de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is celebrated with rituals to remember the deceased. Celebrations are held in the graveyards and symbolic decorations of the deceased are put up in the family household (Kawaga-Singer, 1994).

These examples are merely the tip of the iceberg. There seem to be an unlimited amount of cross-cultural examples of post-funeral rituals throughout the world. It seems clear that for most of the world, post-funeral ritual is a vital component of the grief process.

Lack of Ritual in the United States

There is a noted lack of ritual in general in the U.S. (Rosenblatt, et al., 1976; Sanders, 1992). Rituals such as eating dinner around the family table or observing holidays with particular traditions seem to be diminishing in number (Sanders, 1992). However, this decrease in using ritual does not signify that they are not important. Rituals filled an important role of a society by reinforcing its familial and societal structure (Sanders, 1992). Over time, people have gradually become more uncomfortable with using rituals (Cassem, 1976). There is now a general ambivalence to ritual (Irion, 1990-1991). This ambivalence to ritual in general has transferred to a typical avoidance of ritual after the funeral. In fact, funeral attendance is dropping considerably in the U.S. (Sanders, 1992), not to mention the virtual non-existence of post-funeral rituals.

Grief rituals, including post-funeral rituals, are common worldwide but are nearly non-existent in the U.S. Several reasons account for this discrepancy. First, people in the U.S. are generally uncomfortable with most types of ritual (Irion, 1990-1991). Also, Western culture values the medical model, which is not conducive to ritual (Kawaga-Singer, 1994). Purely scientific approaches leave little room for the validity of ritual. Also, Western culture expects death and grief to be quick, short-lived, private, and detached (Kawaga-Singer, 1994). People would often rather avoid the topic of death and bereavement; this attitude translates into an avoidance of the grief process as well. Post-funeral rituals seem to be a vital component to grief processes around the world; perhaps the U.S. could receive similar benefits. Rituals seem to be emerging as a more acceptable and important piece of grief, largely based on cross-cultural study and increased psychological knowledge of their importance on grief (Irion, 1990-1991). However, much work is left to be done in the area, both in research and in practical clinical application.

Appendix D

Clinical Evidence for the Effectiveness of Ritual

Post-funeral rituals are used in a wide variety of therapeutic contexts. Several clinicians and authors have used ritual in grief counseling with success. This appendix will illustrate the evidence provided by authors for the effectiveness of post-funeral ritual on adjustment to bereavement as well as describe the negative consequences that clinicians have observed when ritual is not used.

Several authors point to the general effectiveness of post-funeral ritual on adjustment to bereavement. Rando (1985) and Reeves (1990) both describe rituals as effective tools for resolving grief and point to their utility as therapeutic interventions for bereaved clients. Authors suggest that rituals are an important and natural part of the grieving process. Rituals are seen as “crucial to mourning” (van der Hart & Goossens, 1987). Other authors agree, asserting the importance of using ritual throughout the grieving process even after a large amount of time has passed since the death (Horacek, 1995). Van der Hart & Goossens (1987) employ ritual as the central therapeutic force in grief counseling, presenting it as vital homework exercises which actually facilitate most of the grief work. In simplistic terms, clinicians agree that post-funeral rituals help positive adjustment to bereavement (Rando, 1988) and help curb prolonged grief reactions (Rosenblatt, Walsh, & Jackson, 1976).

Clinicians who use rituals regularly assert that post-funeral rituals help the bereaved accomplish the tasks of grief more quickly and effectively (Rando, 1984). The most common rationale for using post-funeral rituals is that they are well-suited to overcome impediments to grief resolution (Rando 1988). For example, the counselor using rituals in this way would explore the grief tasks that remain for the survivor. Rituals would then be constructed to facilitate that particular grief stage or task. If the survivor needed to express their emotions, a ritual could be constructed which would help that person actively move through their emotions of grief (Attig, 1991). Some authors describe the limits that ordinary “talk-therapy” has; rituals utilize more than verbal exchanges to help move the person forward (Whitaker, 1985). Rituals are often used to help accomplish the tasks of grief and facilitate transition from one grief stage to the next (Raphael, 1982).

Particular Benefits of Ritual

Rituals seem to have some particularly effective aspects. A strongly supportive sentiment in grief and loss literature is that participating in a ritual on holidays and anniversaries is especially helpful (James & Cherry, 1988; Murray, 1997; Rando, 1988; Schucter & Zisook, 1993; Weizman & Kamm, 1985). These authors state that using ritual during these special dates helps structure the time and provide an active way of handling a typically painful situation. Anniversaries and holidays seem to be the most popular times for rituals to be employed (James & Cherry, 1988).

Another common belief among clinicians is that rituals are particularly effective for facilitating complicated grief (Raphael, Middleton, Martinek, & Misso, 1993;

Whitaker, 1985). Complicated grief encompasses a variety of factors but in general the term refers to grief which is unexpected, sudden, violent, or tragic (Worden, 1991).

Rituals are often used to help structure these chaotic times as well as express a wider range of emotions that may not be found in uncomplicated grief. Some authors point to the use of ritual for complication in the death event itself, as in unexpected grief (van der Hart & Goossens, 1987); others focus on the importance of ritual for complications in the type of griever, as in disenfranchised grievers (Kollar, 1989). Regardless of the source of the complications, rituals seem to be utilized with more urgency when complex grief issues surface.

Rituals have also been found to be useful for different populations of grievers. Most of the literature on rituals is gleaned from case studies of individuals who have utilized ritual in a therapeutic context. However, researchers emphasize the generalizability of these findings. Rituals have been used with high degrees of success in group settings (Janowiak, Mei-tal, & Drapkin, 1995). Also, case studies exist which utilize family rituals that employ each family member individually and collectively (Rando, 1985; Weizman & Kamm, 1985). A significant belief in clinical lore is that rituals carry more power and therapeutic benefit when they are shared with others (Lattanz & Hale, 1984-1985). While post-funeral rituals have been shown to be effective even when simply imagined in isolation (van der Hart, 1988), most of the literature emphasizes the importance of engaging in ritual both as an individual and also as part of a larger group.

Research Findings

A limited amount of research exists on the use of post-funeral ritual on adjustment to bereavement. The research that does exist is supportive of the positive role ritual plays. Perhaps the most informative piece of research is a quasi-experimental study by Bolton & Camp (1989). They asked bereaved people to describe the rituals they performed as well as describe how helpful they perceived the rituals to be. They found that while the survivors did report positive effects of ritual on their bereavement, the findings narrowly missed statistical significance. They also listed several types of ritual that the participants described and urged that more focused research be completed in the area of grief rituals.

Much of the remaining research is cross-cultural in nature and focuses on how ritual is used in other cultures. While this information is likely to be indicative of the positive role ritual can play in bereavement, it is important to remember the cross-cultural limitations the research has for using ritual in the U.S. The most common finding in this type of research is that as the prevalence of post-funeral rituals increases, the incidence of prolonged grief decreases (Rosenblatt, et al., 1976). Specific benefits have also been illuminated. Cultures with funeral and post-funeral rituals have been shown to have better adjustment, better memories, and closer ties to family and friends (Fulton, 1976). Cultures which employ post-funeral rituals have lower incidences of suicide, illness, disturbances in functioning, and prolonged grief (Raphael, 1982). Finally, there is a negative correlation between the use of ritual specialists and anger and aggression in grievers (Rosenblatt, Jackson, & Walsh, 1972). Although this research is dated and

mostly correlational or ethnographic, it seems to point out that the use of ritual does lead to positive effects.

Negative Consequences of Not Using Rituals in Grief

Authors provide clinical wisdom and cross-cultural beliefs to help understand the consequences that griever will face if post-funeral ritual is overlooked. Although many people grieve effectively without using post-funeral rituals in any way, these authors assert that there are certain consequences that many survivors will face if they do not use ritual in their grief process. The most common belief is that a lack of ritual leads to a general complication of the grief process (van der Hart & Goossens, 1987). Grief may become more difficult (Rosenblatt, et al., 1976) or prolonged (Raphael, 1982). There may be a lack of guidance in their grief process, making resolution of grief increasingly difficult to attain (Goldberg, 1981-1982). Cassem (1976) states that a general lack of ritual leads our culture to treat death in a juvenile way—with denial, avoidance, and immature coping resources.

Some authors describe more specific consequences of the lack of ritual. Anger and aggression may remain higher when ritual is not used (Cassem, 1976; Rosenblatt, et al., 1972). Similarly, the lack of ritual may make expression of feelings surrounding the death more unlikely (Goldberg, 1981-1982). Stress levels may remain high (Raphael, 1982). Goldberg (1981-1982) also states that the increased social support that is commonly gathered for rituals may not otherwise be available, complicating the grief process.

It seems clear that ritual is used in a variety of contexts. The grief and loss literature is filled with clinical examples of how post-funeral rituals are used effectively.

Rituals are often used to facilitate adjustment through the grief process with great success. A limited amount of research supports this clinical wisdom. Also, clinical lore suggests that consequences exist when post-funeral rituals are not used. It seems clear that clinicians agree that the use of post-funeral rituals is effective in facilitating adjustment to bereavement in many cases.

Appendix E

Theories and Models of Rituals

This appendix will describe the different therapeutic properties that clinicians and researchers have attributed to post-funeral rituals. It is clear that although this is an extensive list, it is by no means comprehensive. There are undoubtedly more clinicians who have found post-funeral rituals helpful in other ways than those listed here. Also, it is important to note that these claims may have no empirical support to validate them. These claims are based on clinical experience of therapists who employ post-funeral rituals in their practice or grief experts who have found rituals to be helpful for their grieving population. This appendix does not propose that the therapeutic properties outlined here are necessarily valid; however, it is important to illustrate what workers in the field have said about the use of post-funeral ritual in their own experience. The current study will empirically validate the following hypotheses offered by clinicians.

Social Aspects

One of the most common beliefs about ritual is that they help gather social support (Cassem, 1976; Euster, 1991; Feinstein & Mayo, 1990; Fulton, 1976; Goldberg, 1981-1982; Griffith, 1983; Janowiak, Mei-tal, & Drapkin, 1995; Leigh, 1984; Rando, 1985; Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990; Rosenblatt, Walsh, & Jackson, 1976; Sanders, 1992; Sankar, 1991; Schacter & Zisook, 1993). Post-funeral rituals often include the

presence and participation of others. Usually, the individual who creates the ritual will want to share a part of their grief process with others, necessitating the gathering of social support. The presence of others may represent several different things to the survivor. The ritual may provide a place to express appreciation for others (Janowiak, Mei-tal, & Drapkin, 1995) or publicly acknowledge and express their grief to others (Goldberg, 1981-1982; Griffith, 1983; Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990; Sanders, 1992; Zuesse, 1983). The use of post-funeral ritual may reduce the isolation of the survivor (Euster, 1991) or reconfirm social ties (Rando, 1984; Sankar, 1991). It may help reconcile the griever with others (Zuesse, 1983). Families are often brought closer together and communication among family members has been shown to increase during a ritualistic act (Cassem, 1976; Goldberg, 1981-1982; Rando, 1984; Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990; Tong, 1987).

Accompanying these specific social benefits are more subtle sociological benefits as well. A strong theme that clinicians have stated is that post-funeral rituals reaffirm the values and social order of their society as a whole (Fulton, 1976; Goldberg, 1981-1982; Griffith, 1983; Kawaga-Singer, 1994; Kollar, 1989; Myerhoff, 1984; Siggins, 1983). In other words, when others willingly join the bereaved in participating in a ritualistic act, the bereaved person may be reinforced that he is part of a society that cares about others and recognizes death and bereavement as significant events. The bereaved will come away from the ritual feeling that they still “fit in” with society even though they are experiencing tremendous grief. The bereaved person’s “need to belong” to their society will be fulfilled (Goldberg, 1981-1982; Sanders, 1992). Their sense of community is enlarged (Kollar, 1989; Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990). It provides a way for the

community to express its concern for one of its members while at the same time helping that member feel cared for and supported.

Emotional Awareness

Another major reason that clinicians find rituals helpful is that they facilitate the awareness and expression of feelings. A bereaved person may often feel uncomfortable expressing the emotions surrounding their grief. Rituals, because of their out-of-the-ordinary aura, may help “de-intellectualize” the grief process and bring the emotional world of the griever in to the forefront. Rituals might be used to help understand and express the wide range of emotions that grief causes (Bolton & Camp, 1989; Irion, 1976; Kollar, 1989; Lattanz & Hale, 1984-1985; Raphael, et al., 1993; Rosenblatt, Jackson, & Walsh, 1972; Whitaker, 1985; van der Hart & Goossens, 1987). After expressing these feelings, the survivor often feels a sense of relief or catharsis (Feinstein & Mayo, 1990, Lattanz & Hale, 1984-1985). Post-funeral rituals may be able to play a crucial role in facilitating this necessary emotional work.

Structure and Control

Many authors say that post-funeral rituals may be especially helpful for the increasingly unstructured period after the funeral. Rituals may provide a structure or a stability to help the bereaved navigate their grief (Kafka, 1983; Kawaga-Singer, 1994; Murray, 1997; Myerhoff, 1984; Rando, 1985; Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990; Sankar, 1991; Weizman & Kamm, 1985; Zuesse, 1983). A sense of safety is created, providing reassurance and allowing for risks to be taken (Kawaga-Singer, 1994; Myerhoff, 1984; Sankar, 1991). A survivor might examine their grief process and create a ritual to help

them through a particularly tough spot; in this way the ritual provides a safety net for the grief process. Rando describes this process as “delimitation” (Rando, 1985). Limits are put on the grief so that the bereaved understands that their grief will not overwhelm them. They can undertake as much or as little grief work as they want to at a particular time. Grief is broken down into manageable pieces. For this reason, rituals are commonly used for navigating anniversaries and holidays (Feinstein & Mayo, 1990; Murray, 1997).

Similarly, rituals can increase a person’s sense of control over their grief. Siggins (1983) says that rituals provide control over events that are otherwise threatening, unknown, or frightening. A person creates a ritual to handle the amount of grief that is acceptable to them. In this way, the bereaved begins to feel a sense of personal power over their grief (Rando, 1984; Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990; Sanders, 1992). A crucial step in grief work is feeling power—it leads to moving forward in the grief process instead of being stunted. Rituals are especially helpful for structuring and empowering an otherwise chaotic grief process.

Moving Forward

Rituals promote active grief work (Bolton & Camp, 1989; Cassem, 1976; Euster, 1991; Feinstein & Mayo, 1990; James & Cherry, 1988; Rando, 1985; Raphael, et al., 1993; Sanders, 1992). They help guard against complacency or passive inactivity by encouraging the person to do something active and using immediacy to unstick the grief process (Friedman & Pettus, 1985; Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990; Sanders, 1992). With their emphasis on activity, emotional expression, structure, and control, the post-funeral ritual encourages the person to take responsibility for their grief process (Bolton &

Camp, 1989; James & Cherry, 1988; Siggins, 1983). Authors consistently point out the usefulness of post-funeral rituals on completing the grief tasks. Clinicians have used ritual to help their bereaved clients accept the death (Cassem, 1976; Rando, 1988; Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990; Sanders, 1992; Schucter & Zisook, 1993). As shown above, rituals are often used to help the bereaved understand and express their emotions (Irion, 1976; Lattanz & Hale, 1984-1985; Kollar, 1989; Rosenblatt, et al., 1976; Whitaker, 1985). Rituals can also help the transition into adjusting to a new life without the deceased (Bolton & Camp, 1989; Raphael, 1982). Finally, clinicians have used rituals to help provide a sense of closure on the grief process (Feinstein & Mayo, 1990; Goldberg, 1981-1982; Raphael, et al., 1993; Reeves, 1990).

Meaning

Post-funeral rituals may also help provide a new meaning for the bereaved (Attig, 1991; Benoliel, 1985; Goldberg, 1981-1982; Kafka, 1983; Lattanz & Hale, 1984-1985; Myerhoff, 1984; Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990; Sankar, 1991; van der Hart & Goossens, 1987). Grief forces the survivor to contemplate their own existence and the larger questions of meaning in their life. The symbolic behavior of the ritual represents a deeper meaning for that person (Irion, 1990-1991). Meaning is altered as they create and perform the ritual. The survivor's perspective on mortality, relationships, spirituality, or the future may be challenged (Fulton, 1976; Sanders, 1992). Because the ritual is an out-of-the-ordinary experience, new insights and perspectives may be more likely to be gained (Lattanz & Hale, 1984-1985; Sanders, 1992). The person's sense of meaning is therefore altered in fundamental ways by the post-funeral ritual.

Relationship with the Deceased

Finally, rituals may help survivors remember the deceased or change the relationship they have with their loved one. Post-funeral rituals are often used as memorials or tributes to the deceased (Cassem, 1976; Euster, 1991; Feinstein & Mayo, 1990). They stimulate memories of the deceased and help remember who they were (Schucter & Zisook, 1993; Weizman & Kamm, 1985). Also, rituals aid decathexis and help change the relationship with the deceased (Rando, 1984). Dependency is decreased and the person realizes that he/she is moving on without the loved one (Friedman & Pettus, 1985; Rosenblatt, et al., 1972). The survivor remembers the deceased but may also begin to invoke a different type of relationship with them while conducting a post-funeral ritual.

Appendix F

Ritual as a Rite of Passage

Much of the theoretical work on post-funeral rituals focuses on the comparisons between rituals and rites of passage. This appendix will illustrate these similarities and highlight the match between rites of passage and grief rituals in particular.

Rites of Passage

Most of the research on rites of passage comes from the work of anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in his 1950 book entitled, Rites of Passage. He examined rites of passage in several different cultures in order to understand the foundations of these rites. He described rites of passage as times of transition in life that are navigated with a special ceremony or meaning attached to it. Life transitions include such events as birth, adolescence, marriage, or death. He postulated that life is made of a series of transitions and that rites of passage help maneuver through these times of transition. He found that rites of passage comprise three stages: separation, transition, and reaggregation. A particular rite of passage must include all three of these stages. For example, a new mother might separate from her previous identity as a spouse only, begin her duties as a mother, and join other mothers in the community to get help. Complete passage through a life transition must include all three stages of the rite of passage. Rites of passage are

simply moments in life at which a person realizes that they are entering into a new identity or new way of being and seek to attach additional meaning to that transition.

Van Gannep, among others, wrote that rites of passage are intricately connected to ritualistic acts (Rando, 1984; Raphael, 1982; van Gannep, 1960). Most life transitions contain symbolic expressions of cultural values and connectedness, often in the form of ritualistic behavior (van Gannep, 1960). The goal of ritual as it concerns rites of passage is to facilitate smooth passage through all three stages (Danforth, 1982). For example, becoming an adolescent in different cultures can mean very different things. Therefore, the ritual that is attached to this rite of passage will symbolically represent the meaning that stage has for that society. Some cultures employ fertility or bravery rituals, while others use driving tests and graduation ceremonies. Many authors have written that the transition stage is the most important stage in the rites of passage model; rituals are most commonly employed to symbolize and facilitate this stage (Danforth, 1982; Kollar, 1989; Sankar, 1991; Rando, 1984; Raphael, 1982).

Rites of Passage and Grief Rituals

Many authors have noted the similarities between van Gannep's rites of passage model and most grief models. The grieving process is ordinarily comprised of four stages: acceptance, experiencing the pain, adjustment to new life without the deceased, and reinvestment in new relationships (Bolton & Camp, 1989; Rando, 1985; Sanders, 1992; Worden, 1991). The first two stages can be theoretically combined into one stage of acceptance and pain. In this way, the rites of passage model and grief models are clearly similar: separation/acceptance and pain, transition/adjustment to new life, and

reaggregation/reinvestment in new relationships (Bolton & Camp, 1989; Rando, 1985).

Rites of separation include accepting that the death is final and irreversible as well as

expressing the pain of the loss (Kawaga-Singer, 1994). Rites of transition and

reaggregation come later in the grief process and help the person adjust to their new life

and put closure on their grief process (Rando, 1984). Even van Gannep noted that grief

involves these stages and that they match up closely to rites of passage (van Gannep,

1960). He noted that cross-cultural evidence is in abundance for this theory in that death

rites involving separation, transition, and reaggregation are common in most cultures. He

also stated that most of mourning occurs during the transition and reaggregation, calling

the transition stage the most “enduring and complex in grief.” Theoretically, the grief

process mirrors rites of passage. Many authors suggest that since rituals are commonly

used to facilitate rites of passage, rituals can be used with similar effectiveness for the

grief process.

Appendix G

Qualitative Approach

This appendix will focus on several aspects of qualitative research. First, the rationale for using a qualitative methodology for this particular study will be presented. Then, the benefits and rationale of qualitative research overall will be discussed. Then, these research methods will be specifically applied to the current study. Finally, validity and reliability issues will be discussed.

Rationale for Using a Qualitative Methodology

The qualitative approach seemed particularly apt for this study for two main reasons. First, the nature of this particular study had a qualitative element that is central to its focus—understanding how post-funeral ritual facilitates adjustment to bereavement in the words of grief and loss survivors themselves. Second, the state of grief and loss literature calls for a qualitative approach before quantitative approaches are utilized.

Qualitative Aspects of Post-funeral Ritual

Understanding the role of post-funeral ritual in adjustment to bereavement requires a qualitative approach in order to accurately represent the benefits of ritual as described by survivors. The clinical knowledge of post-funeral ritual is currently restricted to theories and assumptions offered by therapists and writers (Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990). Even this knowledge has been described as “poorly understood”

(Reeves & Boersma, 1989-1990). It is important to understand post-funeral ritual from the point of view of the survivors who have utilized ritual in their own grief process.

A large portion of grief and loss literature has traditionally been qualitative in nature. Benoliel (1985) states that, “grief includes scientific and humanistic elements” and therefore research must include both aspects. Literature on post-funeral ritual should also incorporate this approach. Meaning and context are crucial to ritual (Bolton & Camp, 1989). Rituals must be personally meaningful and individually developed in order for them to be most effective (Cassem, 1976; Rosenblatt, Walsh, & Jackson, 1976).

Researchers who do not emphasize the participants’ point of view may miss critical elements involved in post-funeral ritual by making inaccurate assumptions. Researchers have become more emphatic in requesting that a qualitative approach be taken in this area because the results are based on accurate data sources—the survivors themselves (Bolton & Camp, 1989; Lattanz & Hale, 1984-1985; Rodabough, 1981).

State of Post-funeral Ritual Literature

Literature on post-funeral ritual is at a point where a qualitative approach seems most beneficial. Authors write that post-funeral rituals are effective and help adjustment (Rando, 1988). However, pilot experimental studies have not demonstrated a statistically significant link between post-funeral ritual and adjustment (Bolton & Camp, 1989).

These results indicate that perhaps the constructs are not well understood, making further quantitative studies impractical (Rodabough, 1981). It is necessary to understand a phenomenon well before putting it to experimental tests. Hypotheses cannot be generated without some understanding of the variables at hand. Qualitative studies are

necessary to clarify the variables and factors involved in post-funeral ritual (Rodabough, 1981). External validity of future scientific approaches to post-funeral ritual will continue to be low until the phenomenon is better understood. Qualitative approaches are utilized specifically because of their high levels of external validity and their ability to provide hypotheses for later research studies (Rodabough, 1981). The current qualitative study will provide a rich understanding of the post-funeral ritual and provide a foundation for future quantitative work to be undertaken.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a methodology which attempts to gain contextual information and rich, detailed subtleties of a phenomenon in order to describe that phenomenon fully and develop theories for how that phenomenon functions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is characterized by a holistic, emergent, inductive, and naturalistic methodology (Glaser, 1992; Patton, 1990). It arose in the 1920's as a method for obtaining deeper, richer information in the fields of sociology and anthropology and has since grown to encompass several different disciplines (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Denzin & Lincoln (1994) describe qualitative research as stressing "the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning."

Qualitative is often pitted against quantitative research; however, the two methodologies are not mutually exclusive. Each attempts to understand the phenomenon at hand by utilizing a series of research methods which are designed to facilitate

understanding of the variables involved and achieve a deeper understanding of the essence of the phenomenon under study. However, there are major differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods. Overall, qualitative methods are typically more dynamic, process-oriented, interpersonal, and value-laden than quantitative methods (Allan, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Qualitative more commonly focuses on synthesis of the variables at hand and developing a holistic understanding of the phenomenon, while quantitative typically utilizes an analytic approach to understand pieces of the phenomenon more fully. Qualitative research also rejects positivism and emphasizes the perspective of the individual and rich descriptions of the data to promote validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In other words, while quantitative uses scientific and numeric rationales for validity and reliability, qualitative uses more context-driven rationales (Allan, 1991). For example, quantitative research typically employs sample sizes, random sampling, and statistical analysis of the results as part of its methodology. Qualitative research often purposively selects a sample for the purposes of the research at hand, may only use one subject, and utilizes a variety of lingual, phenomenological, and social theories to analyze the material (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1980). Quantitative research is usually standardized before the research takes place; sample sizes are predetermined and research methods are strictly adhered to. Qualitative research is more emergent and retains the flexibility of altering the research design in mid-study without necessarily compromising the validity of the study (Glaser, 1992). Quantitative is often focused on linear cause-and-effect relationships; qualitative research centers around emergent and contextual relationships among variables.

These disparate methods each speak to the thrust of each methodology.

Quantitative methods are obviously better suited for some research questions than qualitative and vice-versa. As Patton (1980) discusses, there is a trade-off in the two methodologies between breadth and depth. He writes:

The advantage of the quantitative approach is that it is possible to measure the reactions of many subjects to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of the data. By contrast, qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed data about a much smaller number of people and cases.

Quantitative methods provide a broader cross-section of data than is usually found in qualitative data; however, qualitative methods are more adept at describing those smaller sections in greater depth and detail.

Given the above comparison, qualitative research is primarily used for two main practical purposes: to understand a phenomenon in a rich, complex, contextual sense, and to provide a wider base of information from which later studies often emerge. First, qualitative research provides the depth and type of information that is often missed in quantitative research. The philosophy of quantitative research is scientific—linear, cause-and-effect, and built upon statistical analysis and determinations of validity and reliability. Qualitative research has an alternative philosophy—understanding a phenomenon as deeply and richly as possible, with the highest emphasis placed upon contextual relevance and an accurate reflection of the material gained (Glaser, 1992; Jones, 1985). The results are often understood only within the context of that sample or that study; results may not generalize beyond that particular study at this moment in time.

Analysis may not employ numerical tabulations; rather, written accounts of the information or creative figural summaries may be used. An emphasis is placed on describing and understanding a smaller range of variables more fully than a wider range of variables more superficially (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Qualitative research is analogous to a travel guidebook for a specific part of a specific city rather than the more “quantitative” guidebook which ranks the best travel destinations in the United States.

Secondly, qualitative research often provides information that can be used for later studies (Allan, 1991). Research domains in quantitative research often focuses on adjusting a set number of variables in different ways for a predetermined, hypothesized outcome. However, information gained in a qualitative study is rarely predictable. Qualitative research is often done on a “blank slate;” that is, researchers often do not know what results to expect because the area under study is poorly understood. In light of the emergent nature of the research paradigm, unexpected themes and variables are likely to arise and become important (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Researchers are therefore required to pay special attention to emergent themes and variables even if they do not seem to fit preconceived notions. Themes and variables which do arise throughout the course of the research are then synthesized and understood through a variety of different methods. These results, largely unexpected and new to the area at hand, naturally lend themselves to further study under qualitative or quantitative auspices (Allan, 1991). Qualitative research is especially suited for studying an area of interest that is poorly understood, in that the researcher can detect emerging themes and variables,

synthesize them in original ways, and formulate a new and more focused line of future research on the topic.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is one of the more popular methods of doing qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It provides a way of exploring an unknown topic with a standard procedure in order to generate potential theories about that topic. Grounded theory surfaced as a new research methodology in 1964 with the publication of The Discovery of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1964). Like other qualitative methods, grounded theory is typically used for studying social processes and puts an emphasis on understanding the perspectives of the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Also, the researcher takes responsibility for interpreting the data rather than remaining as an objective observer (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Grounded theory differs from other qualitative methods in significant ways. The primary emphasis is on theory development (Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Grounded theory offers as its principle advantage an inductive method for developing theory in a topical area, utilizing a pragmatic, emergent, and highly concrete approach (Glaser, 1992; Patton, 1990). Rather than testing a theory's hypotheses, the theory itself is generated. Grounded theory research generally progresses in the following way: In most cases, the original topic area is poorly understood. Data is gathered from participants in that area, typically using interviews, and the researcher attends to any emergent themes that begin to arise out of the data collection procedures. The data is organized and the emergent themes are explored using a standardized methodology

specific to grounded theory (outlined below). These themes or hypotheses that have developed from the participants themselves are then integrated into the remaining data collection procedures. For example, if the first two participants speak about a particular theme during their interviews, this theme becomes an additional focus for the remaining interviews. Hypotheses are verified by the participants, and themes are continually refined as a function of the research process. In this way, theory continues to emerge and be refined from the participants themselves. The theory is thus inductively “grounded” in the data of the participants. As Jones (1985) states, “Theory which is grounded in the concepts and theorizing of the people it is about is likely to ‘fit and work’ as the basis for explanation and prediction.”

The current study is bridging grounded theory and phenomenological methodology in order to understand the effectiveness of post-funeral ritual among the bereaved. Grounded theory has been applied to an immense number of disparate topical areas, ranging from policy management to domestic abuse to grief and loss (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). It is also often combined with phenomenological qualitative methods. Phenomenological research explores the meaning behind certain topics as a way of understanding how and why they function; it is especially conducive to grounded theory methodology (Morse, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Both strategies utilize interviewing as the standard methodology and are theory-generating paradigms which focus on meanings, perspectives, and processes behind the topical area.

Participants in grounded theory research are typically gathered using purposeful sampling. A purposeful sample is selected based on the presence of certain

characteristics (Berg, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morton-Williams, 1985; Patton, 1980). A sample population is chosen which is directly related to the topic at hand. For example, children of divorce, felons, and chronically ill persons are all purposeful samples. Also, this approach usually employs a small sample size. Typically, 10—20 participants are interviewed (Knox et al., 1997; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Morse, 1994; Morton-Williams, 1985; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1994), although more may be necessary depending on the results. A small sample size is characteristic because the topic area is limited in scope and conducive to in-depth interviewing. Rather than gaining superficial information on a lot of people, this method gathers detailed and contextual information on a smaller number of people (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The exact number of participants is usually unknown at the beginning of the research; interviews continue until little novel information is yielded. This point is called the saturation point, so called because the categories that emerge during the research process become saturated with all of the relevant information in that topical area and new information is unlikely to emerge (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The current study followed these guidelines and interviewed 13 participants in order to develop a holistic theory with saturated categories.

Grounded theory employs a standard approach for generating hypotheses called constant comparative analysis. Constant comparative analysis is commonly associated with grounded theory (Glaser, 1978) and seems especially well-suited for this study. The constant comparative method analyzes data by breaking down the data into coded

segments and then synthesizing them back together using a coding hierarchy based on themes found in the data. Analysis proceeds according to the following procedures:

- 1) The interviews are recorded and transcribed.

- 2) Each transcribed response is coded by an “open coding” or “Level I coding” process (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The first level of code is limited to a descriptive rewording of the lines of transcript, simply making the transcript statements more parsimonious. For example, the statement, “I guess in a way the ritual helped me put myself in gear and start to do something” might be coded as the descriptive statement “ritual spurs activity” in the Level I coding process. Level I coding produces concepts that fit the data (Hutchinson, 1987).

- 3) Each of the descriptive concepts generated by Level I coding is examined to find relationships among them. This elevates the open coding to more abstract “Level II coding” (Hutchinson, 1987). The second level of coding puts the first-level codes into second-level conceptual groups. For example, multiple Level I statements about ritual providing activity and action might be grouped into a larger inclusive category called “Increased activity is a benefit of ritual.”

- 4) The conceptual groups and relationships produced by Level II coding are then analyzed across all participants for the purpose of finding the major constructs and themes of the study. These themes are coded as “Level III codes” (Hutchinson, 1987). These third-level codes tie the data from the Level II codes together and allow the data to speak to the major research questions of the study. In this example, the third level code might be “Ritual promotes an atmosphere which allows grievers to move forward through

the grief process. One way this is accomplished is through the increased level of activity that ritual encourages. Others processes include...”. This final step is the most critical and central to the grounded theory approach in that it enables a theory to be induced from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

These procedures of the constant comparative method produce similarities and differences of the data that lead to a rich understanding of the data by comparing concepts with concepts and themes with themes. The constant comparative method is designed to produce a thematic conceptualization among all three levels of coding which “weaves the fractured data back together” (Glaser, 1978).

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are often seen as problematic in qualitative research. Often, qualitative methods are viewed as “loose” and “unregulated” as opposed to the rigorous constraints placed on quantitative studies (Allan, 1991). However, qualitative studies demand the same rigorous standards that quantitative methods do in order to produce valid and reliable results (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Grounded theory and constant comparative analysis employ some of the most standardized and reliable approaches in qualitative research; even so, substantial room remains for inaccuracy and bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is important to represent the data in a valid and reliable way without altering the character of the data itself (Glaser, 1992). Because of the emphasis on theory development, emergence, interpretation, and reflection of the true feel of the topical area, it is important not to require that the same validity and reliability measures used for quantitative studies be put into effect in a qualitative study simply as a matter of

course. For example, random sampling, large sample sizes, or test-retest measures may adversely affect the quality of data gathered in a qualitative study. Just as quantitative studies are especially apt at confirming internal validity in large experimental studies, qualitative studies are equally proficient in ensuring that the theories gained from a small sample are accurate for that sample. Janesick (1994) describes that the definitions of validity in a quantitative study may not apply to a qualitative one. While quantitative studies utilize statistical definitions of validity, qualitative studies use credible descriptions and explanations. A valid qualitative study will formulate a credible explanation based on accurate and detailed data.

Special strides are needed to ensure that internal validity is as high as possible in qualitative research studies. The subjective nature of the research makes it somewhat difficult to monitor the accuracy of the findings and research process. Several techniques were employed in this study to increase the internal validity (Guba, 1981; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The most vital technique was that of member checking. This technique checks the various steps of the research process (i.e., the transcripts, second-level codes, etc.) with the participants to validate the accuracy and goodness-of-fit of the findings with the source. Transcripts were offered to participants to ensure that recording was accurate. Follow-up interviews were offered to give participants a chance to add to or explain earlier statements. Second-level codes and emerging theories were also offered to the participants for discussion. Since grounded theory emerges from the data of the participants, it is essential that the participants have the opportunity to

ensure that their words accurately reflect their experience (Jones, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

A second method of increasing internal validity is triangulation (Knox et al., 1997; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Other researchers coded the data for some interviews to promote reliability through peer examination. This provided the possibility of developing themes that the primary researcher had not considered. Also, the data was analyzed from a variety of theoretical perspectives (theoretical triangulation) in order to provide convergent validity. In this way, different theories were developed and explored throughout the course of the research process to ensure that the most relevant themes surfaced. Rival explanations were explored and negative cases (cases which do not fit the predominate themes) were also explored (Patton, 1990). Triangulation allowed for a more confident understanding of the data. This study also used peer examination—a technique which involves utilizing experts in qualitative research to oversee the methodology—to promote validation of the process and findings. Finally, a confirmability audit was maintained. This audit trail provides the background information and evidence for each step of the research process so that a third-level code can be traced back to its origins in the transcriptions of participants. In this way, theory is still rooted in the original data. Using these methods, the theories that emerged accurately reflected the experiences of the participants in this sample (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990).

External validity is by design usually very high in grounded theory. Data comes directly from the participants in their own words. However, generalizability may be low since the experiences of these participants may be unique in some respects. As sample

sizes get smaller, generalizability tends to decrease (Patton, 1990). Because the primary function of this study was to explore a relatively small sample size, generalizability was a potential concern. Some validity checks increased the likelihood of generalizing findings (Krefting, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study employed nominated samples—that is, participants which represented the general population using a team or panel of judges. The researcher met with the Hospice bereavement staff to pick potential participants. Also, this study attempted to find comparisons between the sample used and more generalized demographic data in order to show similarities. It was important to make this population as generalizable as possible and to describe the similarities and differences that may have existed between this population and a more general population (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Homogeneity of the sample was not necessary for several reasons. First, grief rituals were poorly understood. It was unclear what any of the themes involved in post-funeral ritual were at the time of the study. This study generated theories using an inductive and emergent process; a heterogeneous sample was most likely to provide themes and hypotheses for future study (Knox et al., 1997; Morton-Williams, 1985). Multiple themes are likely to emerge during the course of the study if a heterogeneous sample is used (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Second, it was important to remember that the grieving population as a whole is not a homogenous group. However, there are some general themes that are prevalent across the grieving population, and it was likely that the themes that emerged in this study that reflected the experience of most of the participants would apply to a larger population as well. Third, despite the different experiences that

these participants described, some similarities surfaced. Many of the same therapeutic tools are used for different types of grieving individuals; it seemed likely that this population would also express many common attitude, needs, and feelings.

Questions about generalizability were asked of the participants in this study as well. For example, questions about how their experience might generalize to others or what characteristics about themselves made them ready to benefit from a ritual were asked. Finally, the study used the method of dense description to increase external validity. Participants, settings, and experiences were described in great enough detail so that readers can assume the task of generalizability (Patton, 1990). The responsibility of the reader to determine generalizability is a hallmark of qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1994); it is crucial for the researcher to ensure that the reader can make this determination accurately. Overall, the thrust of a qualitative study is not to extricate the positivistic “truth” from a specific area, but rather to suggest plausible relationships that may or may not transfer to external settings or populations (Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). It was also important for the researcher to delimit the generalizability of the results. Some themes do not apply to each participant. These differences were highlighted and the researcher made clear when the results did not apply to a certain population or setting. Using these validity checks helped to ensure that the external validity of this study remained high (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Appendix H

Letter to Participants

Dear Hospice client:

My name is Neil Gowensmith and I am an intern at Hospice of Larimer County. I am writing to describe an important project I am working on and to offer you a chance to participate. Hospice provides a unique and vital service to many of its community members. As an intern at Hospice, I am conducting Doctoral research to increase our understanding of grief and loss. Through research, the services like those you received at Hospice can continue to improve.

Let me describe this research. My study will be examining the use of post-funeral rituals as part of a persons' bereavement process. Rituals are an important part of grief and loss; however, current research on these rituals is limited. I would like to better understand if and how post-funeral rituals help a person in their bereavement. Rituals include such activities as letting go of balloons, having a special ceremonial meal or gathering with friends, creating a memorial service during a special day, or anything else you have created and carried to bring special meaning to you.

Obviously, these rituals can be very helpful for those in grief. However, we would like to know why they seem to work so well. For this study, I will be interviewing people who have experienced some sort of post-funeral grief ritual. The interview should take about 30-45 minutes and will focus on what type of ritual you did, how it made you feel, and what benefits you gained from the experience. Your input will be very valuable and will help other bereaved people in the future. I encourage you to help in this effort. Your experiences and sharing will be held in the strictest confidence.

If you would be willing to participate, please return the enclosed postcard. I will call you and set up the interview. If not, you will not be contacted regarding this study again. I appreciate your help and look forward to learning from your experience.

Sincerely,

Neil Gowensmith, M.S.

Hospice Intern

Nancy Jakobsson, M.S.W

Hospice Supervisor

Appendix I

Template Interview

The following interview template served as a guideline for the interview that was given to participants. However, the actual interview that was given excluded some of these questions when they were inappropriate and included other questions that followed-up answers given in response to the following questions.

Please give your age and gender.

Describe the deceased. What was their age, how did they die, what was your relationship to them?

Did you have a funeral or a memorial service?

Describe it. When was it, who attended, what comprised the service?

How did you feel during / after the service?

What was it like after the funeral?

What was the toughest part of your grief process?

When did you perform your ritual?

What were you experiencing before the ritual?

How did you decide to do a ritual?

What did you do in your ritual?

What symbols or representations were there?

What objects did you use in your ritual?

Who attended? Why did they attend?

How long was it?

What was the order?

Where was it?

How did you feel before/during/immediately after/long after the ritual?

What effects did you notice after the ritual? Did you act, feel, or think differently?

What were the benefits?

What were the consequences?

Do you still feel the effects of the ritual?

What was the most helpful aspect of the ritual? Why?

What sorts of things changed for you that would not have changed if you hadn't done your ritual?

How do you know the ritual exclusively caused these changes?

How did you decide on the components of the ritual?

Are different things meaningful now after the ritual?

Did your sense of order or control over your grief change?

How did the ritual influence your activity level?

Did your level of personal power over your grief change?

How did the ritual influence how you express your feelings about your grief?

How did the ritual affect your level of social support?

What advice would you give someone else who wanted to perform a ritual?

Appendix J

Descriptions of Rituals and Participants

This appendix will attempt to describe the various participants who were interviewed in this study and the rituals that they performed. The purpose of this appendix is to provide the reader with enough detail to decide if the results of the current study are generalizable to other populations and settings. Confidentiality and anonymity is a priority for this study, however, and personally-identifying information will not be disclosed. It can be assumed that all of the rituals described in this section were original rituals and performed with others except when otherwise noted.

The first participant interviewed was a man in his early 70's. His wife died of cancer approximately one year before the interview. He attended a Hospice bereavement group and some individual counseling before the interview. He described his major difficulty in bereavement as adjusting to the loss of his wife. He described three rituals during his interview. The first was a prescribed group ritual which took place in his Hospice group. This ritual was entitled, "The Rose Ceremony." The group sat in chairs in a circle facing inward. The lights were dimmed and soft instrumental music was played from a cassette player. The group therapist read a brief essay on life and death. Group members were each instructed to pick a rose from a vase in the middle of the circle. The therapist told them that the rose symbolically represented their loved one, and that

because each was a living object, each would eventually die. The roses were placed back in the vase to represent death. Candles were then lit, beginning with the therapist and then transferring the flame to each candle in the circle. The flame represented the qualities and memories of the loved one that remain with each bereaved person in the group. Some time was left for silent reflection, the lights were brought back up, and the candles extinguished. Participants were encouraged to take their rose and candle home for future use. His second ritual involved making a timeline of his wife's life. He performed this ritual with his children. They collected photos and newspaper clippings and other momentos of his wife and placed them in a book. His third ritual involved going to his wife's grave by himself on holidays, birthdays, and their wedding anniversary. He would stay at the grave quietly and place flowers on the grave.

The second person interviewed was a woman in her mid 40's. Her husband died of leukemia approximately 1.5 years before the interview. She attended a Hospice bereavement group and some individual counseling before the interview. She described her major difficulty in bereavement as reinvesting in new relationships and knowing how to grieve appropriately. She described four rituals during her interview. The first was the rose ceremony. The second ritual was a Christmas gift she gave others. She gave close friends and family members a candle that reminded her of her husband along with a letter that she asked them to read to remember him. She wrote in the letter to light the candle when the person thought about her husband in order to remember him. The third ritual was taking a trip to a special place in the mountains. She said this place was a favorite spot for she and her husband. She visited this spot alone for reflection, and then took

some family members there to remember her husband. She often cried at this location. Her fourth ritual was taking a walk behind her house alone. She took the walk in the evening and tried to think of her husband and of how to adjust to life without him.

The third person interviewed was a woman in her early 40's. Her mother died of cancer approximately 1.5 years before the interview. She attended a Hospice bereavement group and some individual counseling before the interview. She described her major difficulty in bereavement as expressing her feelings and seeing her mother in a new light. She described five rituals during her interview. The first ritual was the rose ceremony. Her second ritual was holding a special meal after she and her family moved in to her mother's house. This ritual was held about three months after her mother died. She gave a toast to her mother and thanked her for the house and all the memories and asked for her blessing of the house. The third ritual was sorting through her mother's belongings. She started this process about one year after the death. She went through her mother's possessions by herself, and frequently talked to her mother and cried. She spent time carefully examining her mother's belongings and tried to learn more about her mother's interests and personality. The fourth ritual was setting up a monetary fund for her son in her mother's name. She sold some of her mother's furniture and used the money for her son's college fund. She said the fund represented her mother's continued interest in her son. The fifth ritual was using her mother's china at her Christmas meal. She said the china represented her mother's presence during the holidays.

The fourth person interviewed was a woman in her mid-40's. Her husband died of cancer approximately 1 year before the interview. She attended a Hospice bereavement

group before the interview. She described her major difficulty in bereavement as providing closure on her grief and helping her children grieve appropriately. She described six rituals during her interview. The first was the rose ceremony. The second was a collection of several prescribed Jewish rituals. She described sitting Shiva and performing other rituals throughout the year. When sitting Shiva, she covered the mirrors and had several other people stay at her house for one week after the death to perform the daily chores of cooking, cleaning, and watching the children. She said these activities represented the need to focus on herself, accept her grief, and to rely on others for help. The other rituals were performed during each season and represented the passage of time. They typically involved lighting candles in remembrance of the deceased. The third ritual was drawing. She drew two drawings, one at approximately six months after the death and the second at about one year after the death. The drawings were done alone. The drawings represented her grief, and she said they marked her progress through bereavement. The fourth ritual was playing music. She performed this ritual by herself throughout her bereavement. She would pick music that fit her mood state or that helped her remember her husband. She said the music represented her feelings. The fifth ritual was a prescribed ritual at the local football stadium. A tree was planted and dedicated, a plaque was erected, her daughter played a song, and balloons were released. Her husband's co-workers developed the ritual. She said the tree represented life going on, the plaque represented a remembrance of her husband, the song reminded people of her husband and the beauty of life, and the balloons carried messages to him. The football stadium was chosen because it reflected her husband's interests and love for the team. The sixth ritual

was a prescribed ritual at her daughters' school. A tree was planted and a teacher read to the other children. She said the tree represented life going on and helped the children remember their father, and that the teacher spoke about the importance of recognizing the difficulties of grief the two children were facing.

The fifth person interviewed was a female in her mid 30's. Her teenage son died in an automobile accident approximately nine months before the interview. She had received some individual counseling before the interview. She described her major difficulty in bereavement as providing closure on her grief. She described five rituals during her interview. The first was the rose ceremony. The second was a gift she made for others. She bought a candle, collected newspaper articles about her son, and sent them to close friends and family members. She chose a specific candle which she felt represented her son's individuality and masculinity. The newspaper clippings explained the accident and described her son's life. She did not tell the people when or why to light the candle, but she did tell them that the candle represented her son. She lit the candle when she wanted to remember her son in a subtle, non-intrusive way. The third ritual involved collecting objects that were left at her son's grave. She placed paper and pen in a baggie on his headstone so visitors could write their thoughts. She compiled these writings into a journal and read them. The journal represented the caring of others. The fourth ritual was graveside activities, including releasing balloons and singing songs at his grave. She and her family visited his grave on her son's birthday and sang "Happy Birthday" before writing notes and tying them to balloons. The balloons were released and represented their continuing thoughts of her son. The fifth ritual was giving pictures of her son to family

and friends on his birthday. She enlarged and reprinted a favorite photograph of her son and then gave it out to others at a birthday gathering. She said the photograph represented the caring of her son and provided a symbolic birthday present to her son.

The sixth person interviewed was a man in his early 50's. He had several friends that had died of AIDS-related illnesses during a span of five years. All of the deaths occurred approximately three years prior to the interview. He had not received counseling prior to the interview. He described his major difficulty in bereavement as expressing his emotions and maintaining a connection with his friends. He described one ritual during his interview. The ritual involved picking stars out of the night sky. He would go outside by himself and pick out a star to represent one of his friends. During the ritual, he would think about his friends, think about his own mortality, and express his feelings. He picked out one star for each of his friends, but stopped the ritual when he could not keep them all straight.

The seventh person interviewed was a man in his late 20's. His brother died of an AIDS-related illness approximately ten years before the interview. He had not received counseling before the interview. He described his major difficulty in bereavement as providing closure on his grief. He described two rituals during his interview. Both were prescribed rituals. The first was making a panel for the AIDS quilt. He designed a piece of artwork that was placed on a panel of the AIDS quilt in memory of his brother. His family members also put pieces on the panel. He placed photographs of his brother and wrote "Goodbye" and "I love you" on the panel. He decided on the photographs with his wife because they depicted he and his brother together and his brother smiling. The panel

represented closure on his grief and validation for his own interest in art. The second ritual involved participating in the AIDS Walk. He marches every year in the local AIDS awareness walk. His family also marches in their own community. After the walk, they call each other to discuss their feelings and experiences during the walk. He says the walk represents the continuing need for AIDS awareness and prevention.

The eighth person interviewed was a man in his mid 50's. His father died of heart failure following a long illness approximately five years before the interview. He had not attended any counseling prior to the interview. He described his major difficulty in bereavement as not knowing how to feel his father's continued presence. He described one ritual during his interview. This ritual involved an annual ceremonial meal. He and his wife would meet his brother and his sister-in-law for a meal at his house every year in January. This time was chosen because it was close to the anniversary of his father's death. The meal was comprised exclusively of his father's favorite dishes. They often watch videotapes of the family and his father and trade stories about him after dinner. He says the meal represents his father's interest and lasting impact on the family.

The ninth person interviewed was a woman in her mid 40's. Her daughter died in a car accident approximately two years before the interview. She attended a Hospice bereavement group and some individual counseling before the interview. She described her major difficulty in bereavement as expressing her feelings and providing closure on her grief. She described seven rituals during her interview. The first was the rose ceremony. The second ritual was a prescribed ritual that originated from a friend. Immediately after the memorial service, her friend gathered all of the flowers, dried them, and made them

into a wreath. Her friend gave her the wreath, and the bereaved woman placed the wreath prominently in her house. She said the wreath represented acceptance of the death and the consideration of others. The third ritual was planting a tree at her daughter's high school. She and her husband picked out a tree and placed it in a location that overlooked the mountains and the town. She said the tree represented life continuing on and that the location represented her daughter's interests in school and the outdoors. A plaque was also dedicated at the tree, representing her daughter's interests and preserving her memory. The fourth ritual was holding a ceremony near the tree on the anniversary of her daughter's death. She met her daughter's four best friends at dusk. They played a tape of her daughter singing and some of her daughter's favorite songs. One girl read a letter to the daughter. They all shared stories about her. She said the ceremony represented her daughter's interests in song and the importance of sharing her memory with others. The fifth ritual was lighting a candle at the Christmas table. This prescribed ritual originated from her brother. Her brother picked out candles that reminded him of the deceased girl, gave them to family members, and asked that it be lit during Christmastime. She followed these instructions and said the candle represented her daughter's memory. The sixth ritual was holding a ceremony at Christmastime. She had her family stand around the table and hold hands while she read a letter about death and about her daughter. She said the ritual represented the need for acceptance of the death by her family. The seventh ritual was meeting at the scene of the accident on her daughter's birthday. She met with her other daughter, her mother, and a friend. They erected a cross and left some personal items there (a necklace, other small jewelry items). They said a prayer to her and sang a song.

She said the ritual represented the location where her daughter was last alive and the need to feel close to her daughter.

The tenth person interviewed was a woman in her mid 30's. Her fiancée died in a car accident approximately 18 years before the interview. She attended some individual counseling before the interview. She described her major difficulty in bereavement as adjusting to life without him and gaining closure. She described one ritual during her interview. She did this ritual yearly and by herself. On her fiancée's birthday, she would take letters and pictures that they had given each other while dating. She read the letters and looked at the pictures. She would pray to God and talk to him during the ritual. She would often cry during the ritual. She said the ritual represented her need to grieve in a delimited way and express the continuing feelings she had for him.

The eleventh person interviewed was a woman in her late 20's. Her father died of a heart attack approximately six months years before the interview. She attended some individual counseling before the interview. She described her major difficulty in bereavement as expressing her feelings and knowing how to grieve appropriately. She described three rituals during her interview. The first was taking a drive by herself shortly after her father's funeral. She drove into the countryside with her father's ashes on the seat beside her. She talked to her father and cried. She drove along her favorite river and stopped to cry at length. She said the ritual represented acceptance of the death and her need to grieve. The second ritual was making a picture collage by herself. She sorted through multiple pictures of her father shortly after the funeral and picked out her three favorites. She then put these pictures together in the same place and carried them with

her. The pictures represented her father as healthy, her relationship to her father, and her father as vivacious. The third ritual involved a daily grieving. She would go to her bedroom by herself. She would read a passage from a grief book, look at the three pictures, and talk to her father. She would cry heavily during these times. She said the book represented the need and the tools to grieve, the pictures helped her remember her father, and talking to him reinforced lessons of life she learned from him and provided strength.

The twelfth person interviewed was a woman in her mid 50's. Her sister died of cancer approximately nine months years before the interview. She attended a Hospice bereavement group and some individual counseling before the interview. She described her major difficulty in bereavement as adjusting to life without her sister and expressing her feelings. She described four rituals during her interview. The first was the rose ceremony. The second ritual was sending money to her nieces and nephews on their birthdays. She sent a considerable amount of money to each of her deceased sister's children on their birthdays enclosed with a note which told them to do something special with it. She said the money represented her ability to care for her nieces and nephews in place of her sister. The third ritual was making collages. She made several collages from pictures of her sister and gave them to her family members. She began the collages with her sister while her sister was terminally ill. She finished the first collage after her sister died, and then made several duplicates. The collages included pictures of her sister and other family members. She said the collages represented her need to share the memory of her sister and her need to express her love for her sister. The fourth ritual was making a collection of

videotapes. She made a compilation videotape of previous family gatherings and events in which her sister attended. She copied the videotape and gave it to family members for Christmas. She said the tape represented her sister's love for her family.

The thirteenth person interviewed was a man in his mid 60's. His wife died of cancer approximately 1.5 years before the interview. He had attended a Hospice bereavement group prior to the interview. He described his major difficulty in bereavement as providing closure on his grief. He described four rituals during his interview. The first was the rose ceremony. The second ritual involved scattering his wife's ashes. He gathered with his two sons and a good friend in a secluded spot in the mountains. He picked the spot because his wife had enjoyed that location and he felt it would be undisturbed for many years. His friend played soft guitar music and read a few words. He read a letter to his wife and then he and his sons scattered her ashes. He said the ritual represented the interests of his wife and the need to create a memorial place to revisit. The third ritual was an anniversary ritual he did by himself. He put a candle and a picture of his wife on the dinner table at his house. He lit the candle all day. He said the ritual represented her memory and her continuing presence. The fourth ritual was revisiting the location of his wife's ashes in the mountains. He typically went there by himself. He would take a chair and a book to that spot and just sit and reflect on his life and his wife's memory. He said it provided an opportunity to remember the life that he and she had together. He usually visited that spot on birthdays, holidays, and anniversaries.

Appendix K

Initial Thoughts about Rituals

Participants were asked an average of 13.5 questions regarding the time period before they began their rituals. Their responses were placed into two main second-level categories. First, participants described their initial concerns and hesitancy about performing rituals. Second, participants outlined the various reasons they performed rituals.

Hesitancy About Ritual

First, about half of the participants interviewed in this study reported some initial uncertainty about the role of rituals. Some participants simply said they were unsure what purpose rituals could serve or how to design one. Many explained that they were initially reluctant to engage in their particular ritual. They described being afraid that they would be overwhelmed by the emotions experienced in the ritual, or that the ritual would be uncomfortably intrusive. For example, one woman said she believed rituals were largely intrusive and extravagant, which was very unappealing to her:

So to begin with rituals, I'm really not big on all of that stuff. An awful lot of those rituals I see out there is stuff that I'm not very comfortable with. It's mostly religious, or sometimes political, you know. But it for me has very little personal meaning. So it's been interesting to become aware that the need for ceremonial stuff in me is particularly conflicted by this, "Get away from me. I don't want the ritual. I don't need it. It's more internal to me."

For these reasons, many participants tended to shy away from participating in rituals.

Similarly, participants said that they were afraid the ritual would be an emotionally overwhelming experience. To ease these concerns, participants explained that an appropriate understanding of their own grief processes and a willingness to focus on their grief helped them feel prepared for their rituals. For example, one woman said that she needed a certain amount of emotional strength in order to feel prepared for her ritual:

Well, I think at the funeral, you go into kind of a shock. A shock from the event, a need to just get through the things that have to be done. And I don't think you have the emotions. They're sort of sealed off. You have some emotions, surely, but they're still kind of sealed off and so you can't deal with them. And you don't really have a way to deal with them. But I think they have to come out. We can stuff them for years and years but they still have to come out. And ritual is a very safe way. It's a very refreshing way because it feels good, you know? But it didn't a year ago. Dealing with mother's things didn't feel good at all. It was, I don't know what it was, too raw, too close to the time [that she died]. I just couldn't. I couldn't. But now that time is passing and I can be stronger. My thoughts are broader. I think that's a big part of it. You're able to kind of get, get back to a broader perspective. And I'm kind of looking forward to it because I think time is going to, going to be even better.

Only when time had passed and her grief emotions became less intense was she able to perform her ritual comfortably.

Reasons for Performing Ritual

Not surprisingly, participants in this study performed rituals for a variety of different reasons. Three main reasons for performing rituals emerged from participant's interviews: for the facilitation of their grief tasks, for remembrance, and for their children and families.

Facilitation of grief tasks. All participants used at least one of their rituals to facilitate at least one of the grief tasks outlined by Worden (1992). These tasks include

accepting the death event, feeling the emotions associated with the loss, adjusting to life without that person, and reinvesting in new relationships.

Participants reported examining their grief processes and then developing rituals that addressed their individual grief needs. Seven participants used rituals to help them accept the death event and their grief processes. One woman eloquently defined ritual as, "a way of coming together in a community to acknowledge an event that has happened in common to people." Rituals facilitated acceptance in several ways. Three people employed rituals as early as the day after the funeral to help them accept their losses. One woman took a drive with her father's ashes after he was cremated, another woman made a wreath with her daughter's funeral flowers, and the other woman used candles and mirrors to begin her Jewish grieving process. All three women said these rituals reinforced the reality of the deaths because they were faced with tangible reminders of the deaths. Rituals which involved praying, being with others, and reading grief books helped other participants understand and accept the long-standing nature of grief and encouraged them to take responsibility for their grief processes. Finally, one man explained a twist on the acceptance task as he described making a panel for the AIDS quilt in memory of his deceased brother with his family. Through this process, his family became willing to accept and publicly state that AIDS had killed his brother:

That was, for me, a really good time where my mom and dad accepted the fact that their son had AIDS. If we had done this quilt a long time ago, when we should have, things probably would've been a lot better.

Nine participants used rituals to facilitate the second of Worden's grief tasks—emotional awareness and expression. For some people, rituals helped them

express feelings that they had previously been blocking. Four people explained that the ritual helped end their “emotional numbness,” in that feelings of grief surfaced during the ritual that had previously been suppressed:

When we moved mother out, we put everything in boxes. And a lot of those boxes stood in her garage for the three years that she was here. We went through them pretty quickly to unload them for the house, but I didn't go back through them. And then after she died I started going back through them again. But if you put it in boxes it's kind of like, "Out of sight, out of mind." And it's sort of like a piece of your emotion gets locked into that box as well. So that when you do take them out, you're kind of releasing. You're freeing yourself to see all of it again. And that feels good. And it's helpful.

Another man explained:

I have a lot of memories of just sitting outside wherever I was and looking up to the stars and really just letting some of the feelings come up. I really got to the point where, I don't want to say I looked forward to it, but I got to the point where I really appreciated the opportunities where I would cry. Because there was so much numbness for such an extended period of time it felt like I could go for weeks without shedding a tear...Sometimes it would be hours when I could just let the tears come. And I always felt better afterwards. There's a huge sense of relief that comes from that.

These participants described the emotional expression during rituals as cathartic, saying that after the ritual they felt both emotionally drained as well as a newfound sense of peace and relief. As one woman explained, when she finally felt her emotions of grief in her ritual, they "evaporated." Finally, four participants said that rituals helped them express their grief publicly. They were more able to express and share their grief when others were present during their rituals. Being with others in this context gathered support, helped them share their grief, gave them a chance to talk about the deceased, and allowed them to express their thanks for the support they were receiving:

Well, for one thing, [rituals] have really helped me to externalize. You know, have an outward expression of my grief. And also to share it with other people. I really think one of the most important things in dealing with grief is not bottling it up inside. I mean, some people are able to bottle it up and ignore it. I could bottle it up but not ignore it. So then it would just be there. So this way, you know, I am able to do something and share with others. And it's real important for me to continue to believe that other people miss [her daughter]. And that this is helpful for them too.

Eleven participants also used rituals to help adjust to the loss of the deceased—Worden's third task of grief. For example, participants used rituals to help take care of the necessary tasks that arise after a death occurs. One woman ritualized the difficult task of going through her mother's belongings. Not only was she able to deal with her mother's material possessions, but she also gained a new understanding of her mother and felt more connected to her. In addition, participants said they performed nearly half of their rituals on special days such as holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, and deathdays. They described that rituals helped make these traditionally difficult days easier by giving them a way to incorporate the deceased into these special days. One woman explained:

We would bring these oil lamps to all our holiday events and light them on the table. And have that be symbolic of [my daughter's] life. Because families really have a hard time acknowledging or incorporating a deceased person's presence into their cheery holiday event.

Another woman created a ritual in which she gave pictures of her son to his friends on his birthday, explaining that it felt like her son was present and able to enjoy his birthday again. In these ways, participants said they were able to adjust to the loss of the deceased more effectively.

Rituals were perhaps most helpful for the fourth grief task of reinvesting in new relationships. All of the participants described using rituals either to provide closure on

their grief process and/or to feel closer to the deceased person. Three people used rituals to provide closure. They created rituals which helped them refocus on their own lives and decrease the time they spent on active grief. Two examples illustrate how participants used rituals to provide closure on their grief processes:

Well, there's more acceptance when you get to that point. Acceptance of the separation, the physical separation. And at the same time it brings more of a sense of spiritual togetherness. And it's kind of a freedom because you can go forward from there and feel like you're leaving some of the sorrow and some of the baggage that I've had to carry with it. And kind of maybe starting again. Another fresh look at that person and your relationship now. And I think even then, you know it's like it's easier for me now to say, "Thank you, Mom" for something if we find something special or if we think of something special...So I can say good-bye to a lot of things that maybe I wouldn't have been able to earlier.

Another man was especially thankful for the ritual he participated in; he explained that before he performed his ritual he had no way of saying good-bye or gaining closure for his grief. By writing the words "Good-bye" and "I love you" on a panel of the AIDS quilt, he said he felt free to move on because he knew the quilt would be a lasting memorial he could revisit in the future. As he said, "It gave me that closure that I had never gotten."

Also part of the fourth task of grieving, some participants created rituals which helped them feel closer to their loved ones. For example, some participants said they often felt the comforting presence of their loved one during the ritual. One woman continued to finish a scrapbook project that her sister had begun before her death:

So I guess I find myself, when I finish it, I think, "My sister would just love this." And it's almost like I hear in my mind what I want to hear her saying—"Oh, that's just beautiful. It's just beautiful." It's just a way of hearing something I know she would say. And a real sense of her being close to me. It's like her aspirations for me are living on.

Another man echoed those comments:

Well, I'm probably a little repetitive here, but prior to doing [the ritual] I really didn't have much of a mechanism of trying to maintain some kind of connection with the people who I lost. And that was the most meaningful thing I wanted to develop for myself—a way to try to maintain some sense of connection.

Others found ways to incorporate the memory of the deceased person into the present through the use of ritual; for example, one person played videotapes of his father during his family's annual remembrance dinner. In these ways, many rituals honored the interests of their loved ones and helped acknowledge the changed relationship between themselves and the deceased. Participants thus used rituals to successfully attend to their unique grief tasks.

Remembrance. Another important reason for engaging in ritual was to remember and honor the deceased person. Every person interviewed in this study reported that they used rituals to help remember the deceased and their relationship to them. One man aptly described this process as, "It's not grieving, it's not mourning. It's just a conscious remembrance." Participants used several different rituals to help remember the deceased. The most common method used to remember the deceased involved the use of physical objects such as pictures, audio and video tapes, letters, or personal mementos. For example, one woman lit a candle that reminded her of her son; another participant walked in his garden to remember his deceased wife. Participants even created specific memorial sites which gave people a place to meet and remember the deceased person. In general, these rituals helped bring back memories of the deceased and how they impacted the participant's lives. One man summarized the benefits of including remembrance in his

rituals, saying that it was nice to remember all the things his wife had done in her life and all the things they had done together.

Similarly, participants created rituals that honored the deceased person. Nearly every person said that it was important to pay respect to their loved one through their ritual. Some participants thanked their loved ones for their lives, and some celebrated the things the deceased person had accomplished. One man explained:

I think maybe in the case of a ceremony, it kind of gives you a chance to reflect on all the memories you had through that whole married lifetime. And to be grateful for it. Maybe it's a ceremony of thanksgiving.

Similarly, some participants simply prepared dinners which included the deceased person's favorite dishes and took trips to places that the deceased especially enjoyed.

One woman said that during her ritual she gave herself an opportunity to value the things that her mother had valued, and that after this experience she was able to pay tribute to her mother by incorporating some of those things into her own life. For example, she wore some of her mother's jewelry and used her china during holidays. Rituals provided grieving people a chance to pay tribute to the deceased person by continuing to do some of the things that were important to them and by sharing their individuality with others.

In this way, participants said, the deceased could continue to impact the world even after their deaths. As one woman described:

What ritual does for me is it connects me to the big picture because it allows me to have the memories that keep his presence alive inside of me. I really know what that means. You carry that person inside. I know what that means now. I didn't before.

Helping their children and families. Involving children and families was very important to participants—every person who had children included them in a ritual. They spoke passionately about the importance of performing rituals with their children. One example in particular emphasizes the different benefits participants found when they performed rituals with their children. The woman in this example performed several traditional Jewish rituals and created a scrapbook with her children after her husband died. Using these rituals, she helped her children understand their father in new ways:

I guess all of the rituals that we do as a family are creating a memory for myself and other people and my kids. And I believe it's important to have those memories. And that that's part of the foundation that we talked about. So if you have good memories, they may be sad but good memories, it helps as the kids grow up.

Seven other parents described such rituals as creating photo albums and scrapbooks with their children in order to tell their children about the deceased person.

The same woman also described using the rituals to give her children a family foundation and a better understanding of their family's history. She was able to reinforce family lessons to her children, emphasizing the continuation of family beliefs despite the death of their father:

I just feel like it's so important to do rituals, especially for my children right now. So they've had birthdays, and they've had this and that. And to me the ritual is we'll talk about Dad. That's the ritual on their birthdays or on his birthday. It doesn't have to be a big deal. But it's like creating traditions. It creates a sense of foundation for me and for an eight-and-a-half and an eleven-and-a-half year old child. I believe that they needed and I needed a sense of foundation. And ritual is comforting because you know it will always be there. Every time there's a birthday, "Well, Mom will always say this. We'll always do that." There's something, just about the repetitive nature and the reassurance, that's going to happen time after time to create a foundation, I think. And that's what I want to do.

In this way, family rituals brought their families closer together and created new bonds that were not present before the death. She said that while her children did not understand or like the Jewish rituals she held, she encouraged them to join her because she felt they would understand and appreciate having done the rituals later in their lives. Similarly, another mother said by going through her mother's things with her son, she was able to give him "extended family roots" and pass down her family's heritage to him:

I think it helps. I kind of hope it would be a way that [her son] could understand me better and kind of have extended roots. And maybe though we don't live where I grew up, he could still have a feel for what our family's like. And the traditions and history of it. Sort of feel more a part of the whole, even though he can't be around those people anymore. That's something that all my relatives have given me.

A final reason the above woman performed rituals with her children was to model appropriate grieving for her children. She explained, "I also wanted to model the Shiva ritual with them so they could see that there is a ritual in Judaism that is automatic and that we can rely upon." Several participants felt rituals helped their families grieve in a healthy way. Another woman explained that she held a family holiday dinner ritual in order to give her family some way of acknowledging and dealing with the loss, saying, "Our culture is really devoid of doing things that are external expressions of our feelings." In these ways, these participants created a sense of family legacy, remembered their loved one, and modeled the grief process for their children and families.

Appendix L

Conditions for Successful Rituals

Participants were asked an average of 11.8 questions to determine if certain precursors typically promoted the success of rituals. Their responses were divided into two main second-level categories which encompassed these conditions. The first precursor was that the ritual needed to be personally meaningful to the participant. Also, participants spent a great deal of time discussing the time and energy they put into planning their particular rituals. Accordingly, the second precursor to promote a successful ritual was that the creation of the ritual needed to accurately reflect the participants' needs.

Personal Meaning

Perhaps the most significant finding in the entire study was that rituals must be personally meaningful to the participants for them to be beneficial. The factor of personal meaning seems to covary with every other factor described in this study; when participants discussed a factor regarding their ritual, they expressly mentioned that the factor must be personally meaningful in order for it to be useful. For example, a widow might clutch her husband's wedding ring in a ritual designed to remember her husband; however, the ring might hold less meaning for a grieving co-worker performing a similar remembrance ritual. Likewise, all of the other factors in this study were mediated by the

personal meaning those factors carried for the participant. Every participant emphasized the importance of individualizing their rituals. They described the ritual as a self-nurturing event; that is, the ritual provided an opportunity for the participant to focus on their particular grief needs and deal with them in a personally significant way.

Participants reported that rituals needed to be relevant both to the deceased person as well as to themselves. This section will explore these two themes.

Relevance to the deceased. Participants said that the ritual had to be personally significant in a number of ways. First, the ritual needed to accurately reflect the deceased person. A total of 32 of 39 of the rituals were used to symbolize the deceased person or create a lasting symbol of the deceased person. For example, one set of parents planted a tree in honor of their daughter; this tree was planted at a location in her high school that was special to her. In this way, they individually tailored the ritual to reflect the unique interests of their daughter. Participants also incorporated special objects, such as pictures of the deceased person or certain objects that had belonged to the deceased, to ensure that the ritual accurately reflected for the deceased person.

Relevance to the participants. Second, successful rituals had to be personally relevant to the participant. Participants described this relevance as being the key determinant as to whether or not the ritual was successful. The ritual could reflect personal relevance in several ways. Primarily, participants said they needed the ritual to attend to and reflect their individual grief needs at that particular time. Thus, timing was critical for the ritual. Participants used rituals during each grief stage; however, the ritual needed to fit that person's specific needs during that time in order to be beneficial. For

example, if a person was seeking closure, a ritual emphasizing closure would be more helpful than one focusing on accepting the loss. One woman described how her ritual helped her express her emotions only after she accepted the reality of her mother's death. All participants individually tailored each of the successful rituals described in this study in some way; further, participants described rituals devoid of individual meaning as being unanimously unhelpful:

I find that when I'm in a group or something and somebody will read something to me, I have no idea what they're talking about. I can't concentrate that long to understand it. You could read it a dozen times. So it's the same thing with that ceremony. It's too organized for me. Too contrived.

Several other measures of personal relevance were detailed. Many participants said that the emotional tone of the ritual needed to match their own emotional state. Rituals ranged from raucous celebrations to private reflections, and successful rituals mirrored the emotional tone of the participant. Similarly, spiritual components and death beliefs were crucial to participants and the ritual needed to emphasize these beliefs. For example, one man looked at the stars because he believed that the spirits of his deceased friends went "up to the heavens." Also, time and place was often important. Eleven participants chose to perform rituals at specific times of year or in specific places that were personally meaningful to either the deceased person or the participant. For example, one man scattered the ashes of his wife in a mountain location that he thought represented her love for the outdoors, and he visited that spot regularly on their anniversary. Overall, rituals needed to reflect the personality of the participant. If participants were gregarious, rituals typically involved other people. If they were highly emotional, rituals would

incorporate a way of expressing their feelings. In summary, the main finding in this study was the critical role that personal meaning played in determining the success of the rituals. Participants reported that rituals which were individually tailored to fit the deceased person and themselves were more helpful to participants than rituals without such personal adaptation.

Development and Planning of Rituals

Participants spent a great deal of time discussing how they planned their rituals. This section will explore the participants' discussions about how they created their rituals as well as who they included in their rituals.

Origins of rituals. Rituals had different origins. Participants created and developed 31 original rituals. Planning an original ritual reflected the importance of making the ritual address the bereaved's particular circumstances. Many of these rituals were simple and included such rituals as taking special walks, holding special meals, looking through pictures, putting flowers at the gravesite, playing music, picking out stars identified with the deceased, erecting a cross at the scene of a fatal accident, and taking a special drive. More elaborate rituals typically incorporated ceremonial aspects. Examples included planting memorial markers in the presence of others, and creating special gifts for other people. Participants said the elaborance of the ritual was relatively unimportant—although some rituals were simple, they felt just as effective as the more elaborate rituals. Also important is that about 20% of the original rituals did not arise from a specific plan. Rather, the participants said that sometimes the idea for a particular ritual just spontaneously emerged and made sense. For example, one woman said, "It was

totally spontaneous. I wasn't able to go home yet, but I didn't know what to do. And then it just clicked. I knew it would be beautiful." Participants unanimously described these "spontaneous" rituals as especially meaningful and extremely helpful.

The other eight rituals were "prescribed" rituals—that is, rituals that were suggested by or performed by others and in which the bereaved person simply participated. Prescribed rituals, like original rituals, included both simple and elaborate aspects. Examples included religious bereavement rituals (participants gave Christian and Jewish examples), special memorials, and a special Hospice ceremony using guided imagery. Participants said that prescribed rituals ran the risk of feeling generic and impersonal unless they were able to make the ritual personally meaningful in some way. However, participants also described how prescribed rituals could provide an extra measure of legitimacy and validation to their grief process. One woman explains:

In this case, it's a relief to me that I can say, "My belief system is from Judaism." Judaism has all these rituals set up for the year of mourning and the immediate year after. I look at it as an excuse to the outside world for doing what I would want to do anyway. I can say, "Well, in the Jewish tradition we do this for this reason." In reality, if I wasn't Jewish, I'd still want seven days to be able to sit and do those things. I'd still want to have that year to experience memorials and so forth that we have for the holidays. But it gives me an excuse for it. It legitimizes it.

Inclusion of others. Despite the individual tailoring of most rituals, participants described some general considerations that helped them plan and develop successful rituals. For example, most participants included other people in their rituals—about 66% of the rituals described by participants involved other people, and only two participants performed all of their rituals alone. Participants listed several reasons for including others

in their rituals. In general, many participants said that rituals were simply more meaningful with others present:

Well, for one thing, [rituals] have really helped me to externalize. You know, have an outward expression of my grief. And also to share it with other people. I really think one of the most important things in dealing with grief is not bottling it up inside. I mean, some people are able to bottle it up and ignore it. I could bottle it up but not ignore it. So then it would just be there. So this way, you know, I am able to do something and share with others. And it's real important for me to continue to believe that other people miss [my daughter]. And that this is helpful for them too.

One important reason others were included was to gather social support and caring from others during the ritual. Many participants described that family togetherness increased during their rituals. This support from others made the ritual easier to complete. Also, being with others created stronger bonds and a sense of being part of a caring community:

[The ritual] gave me a definite sense of community. An appreciation for those out there who were very giving to me. I didn't know. I mean, there were so many people out there who participated. I mean there were hundreds of people. And I had no idea that our family had that impact on that many people. So that gave me an opportunity to appreciate all those out there.

Many people also emphasized the importance of sharing memories of the deceased person with others so that the deceased would be better understood and not forgotten.

It is important to remember that participants who included others in their rituals specifically chose certain people to be involved. When strangers were present, the ritual was perceived as less helpful. One man said having unfamiliar people with him during his first ritual created an uneasy feeling and that the ritual was therefore of little benefit to him; when he performed the identical ritual later with people he had specifically chosen,

the ritual was very meaningful and powerful to him. Another man described the difference between including people he knew and people he didn't:

A good friend, I could take up there. The boys, or any of my relatives who would express an interest in making that trip. A stranger, maybe not, maybe not someone who never her knew [his wife]. I might think, well, it couldn't be too important to them.

Participants performed 33% of the rituals completely alone. Eight participants performed at least one ritual by themselves. Participants identified certain benefits from performing rituals alone. First, some participants said they performed some rituals alone because they felt that some aspects of their grief were too private to share with others. They expressed that they needed time alone to reflect on their own grief. For example, one woman said that her ritual of looking through pictures and scrapbooks of her deceased fiancée was so personal that others could not really understand its importance. Second, participants said that being alone made some rituals more genuine. When alone, they felt less self-conscious. Participants talked to the deceased, expressed more intense emotions, and took more time during rituals when they were alone:

It's a little bit more relaxing and I don't feel like I have to give any explanations. Nobody's intruding or pushing me away from where I want to go. And if I get emotional it's okay. And I can talk out loud. That's something I've sort of done too, you know. Talk about it with [her mother]. Like I was sort of saying, "Thank you, Mom. This must have been really special to you." I can kind of talk to her.

They expressed that when they were alone, they allowed themselves to experience the ritual more deeply because they were not concerned with what others would think. In other words, the personal relevance was maximized because participants concentrated solely on their own needs:

I don't feel right about just telling people about it for some reason. It seems like a private thing. If someone else was there I wouldn't do it. Period. I'd just skip to the next day. It's my time. And if I get upset, I don't want anyone to see me. [I don't have to worry about] what anybody else thinks, or anybody else feeling like they're not participating or they are participating or whatever. It's just my time.

It is important to remember that when discussing the necessary conditions that promote a successful ritual, the primary key is making it personally meaningful. Each person and each ritual was unique. Further, 77% of participants performed rituals both alone and with others. All participants performed multiple rituals, and they typically performed different rituals at different times for different reasons. Participants performed some prescribed rituals and some original rituals. Some rituals arose from a great deal of planning and development, while others arose spontaneously or were prescribed. It is impossible to delineate which factors must be present to create a successful ritual—the factors change based on individual needs. However, participants emphatically stated that if the above factors were tailored to create a personally meaningful experience, then the ritual was more likely to be successful. Therefore, like all of the factors described in this study, the factors which are inherent in planning and developing successful rituals are subject to the larger precursor of personal meaning.

Appendix M

Components of Rituals

Participants were asked an average of 10.3 questions to ascertain what types of elements comprised most rituals. Participants described several common components that were shared across many different rituals. Four main second-level categories summarize these elements: symbolic elements specifically chosen by the participant, the presence of emotions, the presence of spirituality, and the meta-awareness that participants had of performing a ritual.

Use of Symbolic Elements

Ritual is defined as a symbolic act. Participants used rituals to symbolize several different things. The use of symbolism was enacted in several different ways. This section will outline how participants used symbolic objects, artistic mediums, time, and location to provide symbolism in their rituals.

Symbolic objects. To begin, participants included symbolic objects in 29 of the 39 rituals. Physical symbolic objects seem central to rituals and helped make the ritual more significant. Objects, including photographs, flowers, balloons, roses, candles, dishes, letters, trees, headstones or memorial markers, newspaper articles, stars, wreaths, a quilt, a scrapbook, a cross, grief books, and the ashes of the deceased, were used most often to symbolically represent or remember the deceased person. For example, one man picked

out stars for each of his friends who had died from AIDS; he explained that each star helped him remember that person and feel connected to them. Another man used a candle in his ritual, saying, "The candle is alive. It has a life or a spirit, I guess. Something that moves back and forth a little bit in the breeze." Finally, one woman explained the importance of touching her mother's belongings:

Well, it gave me a chance to remember her in a physical way. You know, her perfumes and the way she smelled, her gloves from a generation gone by, her clothes just to see them again and remember her in them. I think it's given me maybe a piece of her life that I wasn't around for. Like a lot of her china and silver and things. So it gave me a chance to share some of the joys of her life.

Artistic mediums. Participants also used artistic mediums in their rituals. Artistic mediums included music, drawings, quilts, and words. Words and music were the most popular artistic mediums used in rituals; 92% of participants used either words or music in one of their rituals. More than half of the rituals contained spoken words, ranging from poetry to prepared eulogies to spontaneous speeches. In all cases, however, all participants emphasized that the spoken words needed to have personal significance in order to be useful. Music was another primary artistic medium used in rituals. Five participants played symbolic music that was special to the deceased person or to themselves, usually to help honor the deceased person or set the appropriate emotional tone for the ritual. In one ritual, a woman played a tape of some of her favorite songs, some of her daughter's favorite songs, and a recording of her daughter singing and talking. She said that while it was difficult to be confronted with her deceased daughter's voice, the tape helped her remember her daughter's voice and feel closer to her:

It helps bring her spirit. I mean, it just brings her essence kind of more present. You think you remember it, and you kind of do, but you don't. I don't know, it's a spiritual kind of feeling almost that she was still there.

Time and location. Other important symbolic components included the time and location of the ritual. Ten participants regularly held rituals at symbolic times of year or on special symbolic days such as birthdays, deathdays, holidays, and anniversaries. For example, one woman dedicated a memorial for her daughter on June 21st (the first day of summer) because it symbolized her daughter's love for summertime. Time of day was also important; dusk and nighttime seemed to increase introspection as well as decrease self-consciousness (since participants were less likely to be seen by others).

Eleven participants also planned rituals at certain symbolic locations. Locations usually symbolized the deceased person's interests; for example, mountains, schools, and a football stadium were all sites which reflected the personal interests of particular loved ones. Other locations such as graves and memorial markers were often used for rituals because they brought comfort to the participants and provided a common meeting place for all involved. One man describes how he picked a location in the mountains to spread his wife's ashes:

I tried to think of an appropriate place to put them. And she loved the outdoors, and it's beautiful up where they are. It's along a stretch of river, right next to the river itself. And I think now it's become kind of a sacred spot for me. And [my sons] will always have that place in mind.

Five participants created their own lasting memorials. The locations of these memorial markers also had symbolic meanings, representing the personal interests of the deceased or the site of the death. These rituals created a permanent marker and gave people a

lasting place to meet and honor the deceased. One woman describes the importance of marking where her daughter was killed:

On the anniversary of her death this year, my other daughter and one of her friends and my mom and I all met there [at the scene of the accident]. And we stayed there for about half an hour. It's not really a substitute for a grave, but it's the last place my daughter was alive. And so that's where her spirit left. And so it's important to me. I mean, that's just as close as I can get to where she was alive last. And it just sort of marks the place.

In summary, time and location, as well as objects and artistic mediums, were important symbolic elements in post-funeral rituals.

Presence of Emotions

Other components were found in most rituals, though they did not carry the same symbolic nature of the above elements. These included the role of emotions, the presence of spirituality, and the meta-awareness of performing a ritual, and they were critical to the success of most rituals. The most consistent component found in rituals was the role of emotions. Every participant reported that 100% of their rituals included an emotional aspect. Participants spent a large portion of the interviews exploring and describing the feelings that arose during their rituals, emphasizing the critical role that emotions played in each ritual. About one-third of the participants said that the rituals created a safe, non-threatening atmosphere in which they felt more free to experience and express their grief emotions. In this way, they said that their rituals helped them become aware of their feelings, express their feelings, and deal with their feelings. As one woman said, "The emotional was more important than the intellectual." The presence of emotions was evidenced by the surfacing and expression of different feelings during the ritual. This

woman's experience exemplifies shows the multitude of emotions that often surfaced in just one ritual:

I think driving was initially very comforting because I was alone. At first it was kind of weird, and then as I probably got into it more, I got really very sad. I was crying. You know, that recognition of, "Oh my God, you're gone and you're not coming back." And then from there, and there was a piece of me yelling at him because I felt really abandoned. And angry. There was anger at, "You could have stopped this." So all those things. And the whole time just feeling sad and empty and scared because I was very worried about what was in store for my future with my family.

Seven participants said that the ritual helped them become more aware and accepting of their grief emotions and decrease their levels of shock and denial. One man explained that it was as if he was reliving his grief all over again. He felt emotions that were present during his early grief process, and he also felt new feelings that he had been blocking. He explained that reliving his grief, though difficult to do, helped him gain closure because he was able to experience all of the emotions of grief in a safer and more meaningful way. Also, eight participants said that the intensity of their grief emotions decreased as they performed repeated rituals. They said that their sadness and pain was less intense after performing their rituals.

Participants felt a wide range of feelings during their rituals. See Table 2. They reported that 76% of their feelings were positive—most often reporting feeling good, peaceful, or loving. These three emotions alone were reported a total of 87 times. In total, 61 positive emotions were reported 193 times. As one man said, he felt "all of the emotions that go with effectively living with someone for 40 years. All of the good things, and the fun we had, and the love we had." They also reported feeling love and support

from others, feeling thankful and appreciative for others' concern, and feeling good helping others through their own grief. Five participants described feeling more normal and in control of their grief process after their ritual. For example, one woman described that it felt nice to cry and feel the pain of grief because it meant that she was finally accepting her grief and moving forward:

I was different. I wouldn't necessarily know if I was more calm. I was in less shock. So I would get more upset, but I felt more and more like, "Hey, this is what is supposed to happening now that you feel so out of touch."

Overall, these types of positive emotions characterized the majority of feelings experienced during rituals.

In contrasts, participants reported some negative feelings as well. See Table 2.

Participants reported feeling sad, challenged, and overwhelmed a total of 37 times.

Altogether, 19 negative emotions were reported a total of 52 times. Five participants said they felt self-conscious and apprehensive at the beginning of the ritual because they were unsure how the ritual would unfold. However, four of these self-conscious participants reported that these feelings decreased as they became more involved in their rituals.

Interestingly, six participants reported having conflicting feelings during their rituals.

Feelings of love and appreciation often conflicted with feelings of anger and pain. For example, one woman felt appreciative of the compassionate memorials to her daughter but also felt angry because it reinforced the reality of her daughter's death:

Whenever you have a significant death, the nice things that are done for you you appreciate, but at the same time you hate them. Because you would much rather that the person you lost still be around. And so I'd do anything to have my child back as opposed to having this wreath or to know how nice this person is. So there's some dual emotions there. So that's why you say, you know, "Well,

how's the wreath feel?" Well, you know, you're really happy for this extension of sympathy and comfort and caring, but at the same time, you know, I think my words to my husband were, "This just really pisses me off." And at the same time, while I'm sort of cursing the fact that I have to go through this as a parent, I'm also proud that my daughter lived a life that would encourage others to want to have a [memorial] in her name.

Emotions were clearly a primary components of rituals.

Presence of Spirituality

All participants included spiritual components in at least one ritual and emphatically described their importance. One-third of the rituals described in this study included a spiritual component. Four participants used Christian and Jewish elements in their rituals (such as prayer), while the other nine used non-religious spiritual elements (such as connecting to a higher power). These spiritual components, whether religious or not, seemed to center on the role of connecting to a higher power for guidance and support. For example, prayers focused on asking God to protect the deceased person and their families:

So I just kind of pray [to my fiancé], you know, "I hope you're doing okay and I know the Lord's looking out for you." And I ask the Lord to look out for him and look out for me and protect me and to keep his family and his little girl safe. You know, that kind of stuff.

Attempts to feel more connected to a higher power increased participants' sense of connection with others and rekindled their thoughts about the meaning of life. Several people used spiritual elements to gain new perspectives about the death—to understand why the deceased person was killed, to develop a plan for their lives without the deceased person, or to ask for strength to deal with their grief. One man explains:

The ritual somehow created a setting where there was more solitude. And it wasn't just only choosing these stars to be connected to these individuals, but it was almost like being connected to the universe. You know, being connected to the cosmos. I still can't truly articulate what my understanding or notion of God is, but I definitely do believe there is some sort of higher power out there pulling some strings and exerting some force and influence about what's going on down here on this planet. And there's a certain change of feeling inside your heart and inside your gut when you have those experiences of really feeling that connection to the larger cosmos or to the larger universe. And wondering a lot about, "What's my fate going to be? What's in store for me?"

Rituals seemed to spur other spiritual thoughts as well. One participant described being more uncertain about her spirituality after performing her ritual. She said she had been an atheist before the ritual, but felt more uncertain about her spiritual beliefs after feeling more closely connected to her father during the ritual. In summary, rituals seemed to carry an important spiritual tone and increase participants' awareness of spiritual issues within themselves.

Meta-awareness of Performing Ritual

Finally, the very act of performing the ritual was in itself often significant to participants. Six people said that labeling their actions as rituals made those behaviors more meaningful and significant. One woman reported that sorting through her mother's possessions was more meaningful after she thought of it as a ritual. Before ritualizing her task, it had been a tedious and painful activity. The same task, when given the label of ritual, became a more hopeful opportunity that increased her level of motivation. She gained a new perspective of her mother, expressed her feelings, and put more closure on her grief after she ritualized her behaviors. Three other participants reiterated that labeling

their behaviors as rituals added meaning to their actions and acted as an important component in their rituals.

Appendix N

Reactions to rituals

Participants were asked an average of 14.5 questions to delineate the outcomes that occurred after performing a ritual. Their responses have been organized into two main second-level categories. First, participants in this study consistently described the overwhelming majority of rituals in positive terms, and reported that they were pleased with their experiences using rituals. Second, participants described that rituals enacted changes in lives as reflected by changes in their perspectives, their grief processes, and themselves in general.

Positive Impressions and Evaluations of Rituals

The primary outcome participants reported was that rituals were positive experiences. All participants described rituals in positive terms. Nearly every participant said that they felt better after the ritual than before, and said that the ritual created positive feelings within them. All participants also said that at least one of their rituals helped their grief improve—as one woman said, her grief process would have been more difficult without having done a ritual. Another woman explains:

It feels like I'm cleansing a little bit—I don't know of a better word. It just feels like I'm sloughing off the dead and putting on the new skins here. I don't know how to explain that very well. But it just feels cleansing. It feels purifying a little bit. So it's like, "Okay. I can let that go. For now. I know I'll come back next year

and do the same thing. But for now it feels a little bit better to just kind of let that burden off a little bit.”

Also, several participants viewed the ritual as a powerful coping resource for their grief.

One woman passionately described the importance of ritual when she said it helped her "survive" her grief process. Another man said that his ritual was the climax for his grief.

Participants reported that in spite of their initial reluctance to perform rituals, they valued rituals very highly after they performed them. Several people related that while rituals can be difficult emotional experiences, they should be performed because of their potential benefits. In fact, eleven of the 13 participants encouraged other people to perform grieving rituals:

I guess I would just say don't be afraid to do it. I mean, don't talk yourself out of doing it. Go do it. If you want to go light candles or you want to get together with some people and just sit around and talk about your memories, even though it's scary or you think you are going to be afraid to do it, go ahead and do it. Do the ritual for yourself. Do it because it's what you want to do right then. To memorialize or ceremonialize your feelings of the person that was in your life.

Also, six participants said that they are actively planning additional rituals themselves.

Many people said they did not expect the ritual to be as powerful as it was, and some said they did not expect the ritual to bring up so many intense emotions. The majority of participants reiterated these types of sentiments, saying the ritual was a critical part of their grief processes. As one man said, his ritual was the best thing that he had done since his brother died; he is currently planning a new ritual to further express his feelings for his brother.

Life Changes

One of the most common outcomes described by participants was the significant amount of life changes they experienced after participating in their rituals. They described a variety of life changes after performing their rituals. Changes occurred in several areas—changes in their perspectives, changes in their grief processes, and changes in themselves.

Changes in perspective. A major theme described by participants was their change in perspective after performing a ritual. About 83% of participants said that the ritual significantly altered their perspectives on many different areas of life. Participants discussed changes in their perspectives of the deceased person and of their own lives.

For example, seven people reported that their perspective on the deceased person had changed. Some said that they began to see the deceased person in a fuller, more well-rounded light. They gained a new understanding of the deceased person after going through pictures or possessions and saw them as richer individuals. They also replaced painful memories of their loved one as sick and dying with positive memories of their loved one as healthy and vivacious. One woman described this process:

My vision of my mother was when she was so sick. Those moments are burned into your mind. And now I am kind of flipping that picture and remembering her opposite of that. You know, her smile and her easy-going nature. I can just kind of see her that way.

Their perspective on the deceased person's life seemed to become broader and more inclusive of that deceased person's individuality, and many people said they felt as if they knew their loved one even better after going through their ritual. One woman

explained that the ritual “crystallized” her memories of her mother, making them more permanent, positive, and clear. They began incorporating family traditions and personal qualities that the deceased person valued into their own lives. They were also able to remember lessons of life that they had learned during their relationship with the deceased person. One participant explains how she remained connected with her father during her ritual:

[The ritual gave me the chance to] think about what he would say because he was such a huge role model and, you know, a father figure. He was my dad. So I would turn to him for a lot—for that comfort and reassurance, the things that he drilled into me all the time. I can hear his voice, and it’s nice.

In this way, the ritual reinforced the unique qualities of the deceased person, altering the participant's perspective on the deceased person in the process.

Participants also used their rituals to understand and accept how their lives had been permanently changed by the death of their loved ones. Inevitably, this reflection led to changes in perspective on their lives. Participants described taking time during the ritual to ponder the meaning of life and their future plans. They explored questions about life, death, and grief. Some thought about God’s plan for their lives and asked spiritual questions. Others recounted their past life experiences and explored how those events shaped their current identity. One woman used the metaphor of a touchstone to describe her experience with rituals:

Ritual is a way of expressing your creativity. It’s like a touchstone, really. It’s a marker of where you are, where you’ve been, and maybe where you’re going. To me, a touchstone is like a centering experience. A friend that you’ve known forever can be a touchstone, because then when you’re with them you remember the core of who you are.

Participants described that the ritual created an opportunity that had not been present before to think about these issues. Two participants explained that even though they did not answer any of their profound questions during their ritual, they both felt that it was helpful to ask them and acknowledge their struggle with them.

Finally, five participants used rituals to facilitate their own personal growth. Some prayed for their own needs or used time during the ritual to focus on themselves. One woman explains:

At first I started off doing it for my sister and then I realized, “Wow. This really is part of me. I really like this.” This [ritual] is like a therapy for me. This better than going to a counselor and spending all that money, you know what I mean? It’s like I’m being my own therapist and taking care of things myself. It’s a new period for me—I’m mainly nurturing myself. So actually her death has gotten me to take better care of my own life.

This inner focus increased participants' emotional awareness and helped them handle their grief more easily. Also, one man said that by using his artwork in a ritual he held with his family, his family became more accepting of his artistic pursuits. He said that he felt as though his artistic interests and career path were more acceptable to his family after he was able to showcase his artwork in his family's rituals. In some ways, just as rituals legitimized the grief of the bereaved, they also legitimized the bereaved themselves.

Changes in grief processes. Just as the use of rituals changed participant's perspectives, it also changed their grief processes. Participants explored how rituals helped them address their grief tasks, focus their actions, and create more realistic expectations for their grief.

Every participant reported that rituals helped them successfully address their grief tasks in several ways. For example, several participants said that the ritual helped them acknowledge and accept their grief. Also, six participants said that the intensity and frequency of their emotions had decreased after performing their rituals. As one woman described, "A lot of the feelings still come up, but the blowout of emotions just doesn't happen anymore." Similarly, some participants said that the rituals helped them feel a wider range of emotions than they had felt before the ritual. Also, participants described that they took more responsibility for their grieving as a result of the ritual—they gained more understanding of their grief and realized the importance of attending to their grief. For example:

I do understand the value of ceremony. And at the same time, you're left and you're alive. And if you're going to do something with what you've got left, it's kind of up to you at that time to say, "Well, this is the way it is. If I'm going to be worthwhile to anybody else and to myself, I've got to make things happen." I understand that if I'm going to have a happy or fulfilling life—what's left of it—that I'm going to have to be the one for the most part to make that work. I can't depend on other people to do that for me. I've got have a reason to get out of bed in the morning and get into gear.

Further changes in participants' grief processes were evidenced by their reports that their actions were more focused and productive after the ritual. Eight participants described being more physically active and accomplishing more tasks after their rituals. One woman described how her ritual of giving symbolic presents to others increased her activity level by forcing her to get out of the house, talk with others, and organize her materials:

I think [the ritual] gave me something to do. I can't say it was easy to do. But it was a project. And I guess for the first year you need to talk about it, at least for

me. I felt like I had to tell everybody I knew. So for me, it was a project that I could focus on and talk about at the same time. It felt like I was accomplishing something. Although it wasn't anything that needed to be done, I did it because it gave me something to do and it gave me an opportunity to talk about it.

In this way, the activity required by the ritual itself gave her a sense of accomplishment and direction in her grief. Many other participants described how rituals provided a way of accomplishing meaningful pursuits instead of remaining immobilized by grief. Also, four other participants said the rituals gave them closure on their grief that they had not yet been able to attain.

More than half of the participants described how their rituals increased their understanding of their grief processes. They said that they had more realistic expectations for their grief and felt more control over their grief processes. For example, six participants said they had a greater understanding of their own grief tasks after performing their rituals. Seven participants said they felt more normal after their rituals. A total of 69% of participants described how their rituals helped structure their grief processes. One woman explained that her ritual was like a lifejacket or a buoy that she used to help navigate through her "sea of grief." Her ritual provided direction and a tangible way to deal with her grief, increasing her sense of control in the largely vague process of grief. Others said that creating permanent memorials or yearly rituals put mechanisms in place which provided that structure. In this way, rituals gave participants more control to grieve when and how they needed.

Participants also seemed more comfortable with their grief after performing their rituals. For example, some participants said they felt their grief was legitimized by

holding a ritual. One woman who participated in several prescribed grieving rituals explained that the rituals encouraged her to grieve and reinforced to her and to others that her grief was important and unavoidable. Because these rituals created norms for her grief process, she did not feel selfish or burdensome by participating in them. The rituals legitimized her grief. In summary, participants described how rituals led to significant changes in their grief processes by addressing their grief tasks, focusing their behaviors, and creating more realistic expectations for their grief.

Changes in participants. Finally, participants also described changes in themselves after performing their rituals. Several participants described that they felt more normal in general—that they were able to delimit their grief (Rando, 1984). Participants said that they were able to compartmentalize their grief during their rituals, enabling them to return to normal life without being so fundamentally affected by their grief. For example, one woman described that she remembered her loved one once a year and experienced her grief during that ritual. At other times during the year, she limited her grief and went on with her normal routine knowing that she would acknowledge her grief later during the year:

Well, [the ritual] keeps [the grief] fresh but also not too fresh. It keeps it to where I know it's there but it's not always there. And I know that there will be one day of the year where I can pay homage to him and remember him and all that. Where I don't have to worry about everyday, "I have to remember this. I can't forget that he was like this. And, oh no, I don't remember this." I can't do that everyday. That's just impossible to do. So, you know, I'll just remember different things and just kind of file it back there. And then on that day I'll try to remember it. Sort of a memory storage closet. But it makes me feel good. It makes me feel like I'm keeping him alive.

It's definitely not a can of worms. It's just like, "Okay, I'm opening this for now, for a certain time and period, and that's it." It's going to close up again. So it's definitely helped me control it and, not necessarily understand it, but be

able to live with it everyday. Because I do live with it everyday. I just don't have to think about it everyday.

In this way, she wrote down new life experiences that had triggered painful memories of her loved one and stored them until she was ready to deal with them later. Other participants echoed this experience, saying that by performing the ritual they were able to return to work or school and function more effectively:

If I hadn't done it, I think I would have felt much more lost and scared. Not at peace. I probably wouldn't have been able to come back to school and function normally. Or do well at work. Or move on, basically. I think I would have been stuck.

In these ways, normal life was able to return more quickly through the use of ritual.

Perhaps the most important outcome was that 77% of participants said they felt more confident and empowered after their rituals. Despite the uncertainties and difficulties of grief, participants seemed uniformly more committed to actively deal with their grief after they performed their rituals:

I guess now it's almost like I have to embrace the pain. I don't want to stay there; it feels awful. But it's like the only way through it is through it. I'm not going to get to the other side without going through it.

Similarly, several participants said they had more perseverance to get through their grief process as an outcome of their ritual. As one woman explained, the ritual proved to herself and to the universe at large that she was not giving in to her grief. Instead, she was choosing to go forward and confront her grief:

And for me that's what ritual is about. It's some way of communicating with myself and with the big scheme of things even when I don't believe in the big scheme. Or when I have my doubts. It's a way to say, "See, I'm going to light this candle for you, dammit." Because in grief there is a desire to just give up. It's like, "What does any of this matter anyway?" So I think having the ritual is

something that helps you maybe stay connected. And maybe it's like, "Okay. Look. I am persevering through life. I didn't choose this." And that's more what it is—it's that I didn't choose this.

Other participants described similar outcomes, saying they felt stronger and better equipped to face their grief. Several people described this attitude as one of "survival." Through ritual, they proved to themselves that they were strong enough to handle the pain of grief. Rituals coupled this attitude of survival with a sense of optimism and hope that characterized most of the rituals in general. Participants reported feeling more "healed" after their rituals, saying that they were more confident and upbeat about dealing with both grief and life. Overall, after participants performed rituals, they reported outcomes of confidence, control and responsibility in their grief processes, positive benefits fitting their individual grief needs, and an optimistic sense of empowerment that remained with them after the ritual.