THE EXPERIENCE OF GRIEF
FOR SURVIVING FRIENDS
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Abstract

The expanding body of literature in the field of bereavement has predominantly focused on the grief reactions of family members. The role of "bereaved", with its attendant grieving rights, has almost exclusively been accorded to the spouse and kin of the deceased. Despite the intimacy of the relationship often shared between the surviving close friend and the deceased, minimal research exists defining the experience of grief for these bereaved. Little is known about the meaning the bereaved friend bestows on his or her experience of grief.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of grief in surviving friends. A phenomenological study based on unstructured interviews was undertaken to explore this experience with four adult women who have survived the death of a close friend. By making explicit the meanings implicit in their experience of grief, the meaning structure containing the essential elements of the phenomenon of grief for these bereaved friends was clarified. Ten elements or themes common to the experience of grief for all informants were illuminated and described. Implications for research and practice were also discussed.
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CHAPTER 1
Introduction

Grief has been widely explored in recent years, and is defined as a process of responding to loss which includes an integration of emotional, intellectual, spiritual and physical reactions eventually leading to resolution of the loss (Kubler-Ross, 1969; Lindemann, 1944; Worden, 1991). Theories of grief have variously described the process of grieving as one involving phases (Parkes, 1987-88; Bowlby, 1961); stages (Kubler-Ross, 1969) and tasks (Worden, 1991), the completion of which is considered necessary in order to adapt to the loss.

The concomitant process of grief work, or mourning, is similar to the physiological process of healing, and as such requires specific components to facilitate the resolution of that healing (Worden, 1991). An important component of this healing process is the presence of perceived social support. A review of the recent literature on grief indicates general agreement on the necessity of this component to the resolution of grief. The presence of such support also allows mourners the perception that they have a socially sanctioned role and right to grieve (Doka, 1989; Sklar & Hartley, 1990).

As outlined in their reviews of bereavement literature, Cowles and Rodgers (1991) and Raphael and Middleton (1987) indicate the existence of much ambiguity in the literature regarding the concept of grief. Among the many facets of the phenomenon of grief which need to be clarified, these writers suggest there exists a need to define more comprehensively the experience of grief as it is lived and perceived by various categories of bereaved.

Qualitative studies are beginning to address the ambiguities replete in the literature. In so doing, these studies have begun to expand and challenge specific aspects of the leading theories of
grief. In exploring the phenomenon of grief as it is experienced, Carter (1989) illuminates features of bereavement not addressed by theoretical perspectives. One such aspect involves the pervasive influence on the grieving experience of personal and societal expectations regarding the correct way to grieve. This and other studies suggest that existing theoretical perspectives do not provide a comprehensive definition of the experience of bereavement. Carter (1989) concludes that in caring for the bereaved, a "broad range of unique responses from the bereaved" needs to be anticipated (p. 358). Personal as well as universal responses to grief need to be considered in understanding the experience of that phenomenon.

There also appear to be limitations in the literature regarding which categories of survivors are eligible to grieve. The expanding body of bereavement literature appears to focus predominantly on the grief reactions of the spouse and kin of the deceased. Minimal research exists defining the experience of grief for those survivors, including close friends, who are not related to the deceased. Though the process of grief for surviving friends may be similar to that of family members (Sklar & Hartley, 1990), the loss and grief reactions of surviving friends are generally neither socially acknowledged nor endorsed (Doka, 1989; Rando, 1992-93; Sklar & Hartley, 1990). Not uncommonly, these surviving friends are further unrecognized, or disenfranchised, in their grief by exclusion from active involvement in other components of the healing process, such as the funeral and other mourning rituals (Doka, 1989; Meagher, 1989; Sklar, 1991-92; Sklar & Hartley, 1990).

The preceding research appears to indicate that little opportunity exists for such survivors as bereaved friends to legitimately enter into and complete the grieving process. Given the reality of grief for surviving friends, the question this thesis seeks
to answer is, "What is the experience of grief for the non-familial survivor who is grieving the loss through death of a close friend?". The phenomenological research method will be used to address this question. Through unstructured interviews, the meanings of grief for each participant will be uncovered and themes will be illuminated to clarify the sought question.
CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter will review a cross-section of the expanding body of literature on grief to highlight the various conceptions of this phenomenon. Selected empirical findings, theories, and models of grief will be reviewed to illustrate their contributions to the current understanding of grief. Selected theoretical and clinical concerns that have arisen from the presence of such multiple conceptualizations of grief will also be highlighted.

Several reviews of the field of bereavement literature contend that a coherent and empirically supported model of bereavement has yet to evolve. Numerous remedial suggestions are offered to address this concern. Among those suggested is a need for an increased focus on systematic phenomenological studies in order to clarify the essential aspects of grief as it is lived and experienced, an area wherein there currently exists only limited empirical data. A sample of phenomenological studies will be reviewed to illustrate the contributions this methodological approach has made to the evolving conceptualization of grief.

A review of the literature also indicates that the bereavement reactions and grief experiences investigated have primarily been those of family members. Mourning friends and other bereaved non-kin are rarely represented in academic conceptualizations and empirical investigations, including the current phenomenological examinations of grief. To elucidate this gap in the literature, Doka (1989) states,

We are involved in webs of relationships that include not only family...but also lovers, friends, colleagues and caregivers. Though this point seems obvious, it is often ignored in a society that emphasizes the primacy of the dyadic relationship and the nuclear family, extending to those relationships almost exclusive monopoly to mourn (p. 329).
Literature focused on these disenfranchised and hidden mourners will be reviewed to provide a composite representation of this bereaved population.

Despite such conceptual efforts to recognize bereaved non-kin in the literature, only a limited number of empirical studies exist which provide systematic data related to the experience of grief in this population of bereaved. Fewer empirical studies yet focus on bereavement in surviving friends. The chapter will conclude with a review of those existing empirical studies which focus on bereaved friends, and will point to the fact that few, if any, phenomenological studies have examined the experience of grief in this population. In order to address the conceptual gap in the literature related to the experience of grief for surviving friends, this aspect of the review will emphasize the need for more phenomenological studies focused on bereaved friends and the essence of their grief as it is lived and experienced.

The Grieving Process

Theories and Models of Grief

Based on his observations of bereaved survivors of victims who perished in a Boston nightclub fire, Lindemann (1944) was one of the first thanatological theorists to study normal grief reactions. Amongst the bereaved he noted remarkably similar grief reactions which could be aroused by such circumstances as receiving sympathy, visits by relatives and allusions to the deceased. Although not exhaustive, his compiled list of signs and symptoms offers a foundation for conceptualizing bereavement as a distinct response to crisis involving a set of characteristic biopsychosocial responses.

According to Lindemann's observations, there appeared to be six elements common to the grief reaction. These symptomatic elements
included feeling-related phenomena such as sadness, anger, guilt and self-reproach; somatic distress ranging from tightness in the chest and throat, to a sense of depersonalization; preoccupation with the image of the deceased, and disbelief in the reality of the death; hostile reactions; loss of patterns of conduct, including loss of warmth in relationships with others; and appearance of traits of the deceased in the behavior of the bereaved, notwithstanding other behavioral symptoms such as sleep and appetite disturbances.

Although one of the earliest studies of grief reactions, the symptomatology established by Lindemann (1944) appears to "have proven robust when subjected to theoretical and empirical scrutiny" (Vargas, Loya, & Hodde-Vargas, 1989, p. 1484). Additionally, Lindemann's early work continues today to provide a general guideline for clinical diagnosis and practice (Schwartz-Borden, 1986; Worden, 1982).

Since the publication of Lindemann's (1944) work, literature in the field of bereavement and grief has burgeoned. Several models have been developed to address such process-related issues as the time frame within which the grief response occurs, and the facilitation of grief resolution. Although these approaches seem to differ somewhat in their conceptualizations of the phenomenon, the central themes related to the process of grief appear to be similar. Such subsequent conceptualizations of grief have expanded on the symptomalogical approach of Lindemann (1944) to include a component of sequencing.

In her theory of death and dying, which has been adapted to describe the experience of loss and grief in general, Kubler-Ross (1969) advocates sequencing as a fundamental component in conceptualizing grief. The phenomenon of grief is considered a process involving a sequence of five stages which eventually culminate in resolution of the grief reaction.

The first of the five stages outlined by Kubler-Ross (1969) is
conceived as denial, a state of disbelief in the reality of the loss. The stage that follows is one of anger, which may range from anger with God for taking the life of the deceased, to anger with the deceased for having died and left the bereaved alone to grieve. The dissipating anger is succeeded by behaviors and cognitions which indicate the bereaved are bargaining with themselves or some higher power for the return of life as it was known before the loved one's death, in exchange for some other commodity such as faith or good works. When all preceding attempts fail to return the status quo, the fourth state suggestive of depression ensues. Eventually the depression will be mediated, facilitating the final stage of acceptance.

The sequence of stages appears to be one in which movement from one stage to the next is linear. Once the bereaved individual no longer denies the reality of the death, a transition occurs to the next stage of anger. Transition through the stages continues at a variable rate until the final stage of acceptance of the death is achieved.

As a representative of the stage-based approach, Kubler-Ross' model is effective in demonstrating the dynamic, adaptive nature of grief. In delineating the progressive shifts in emotional, cognitive and behavioral responses, the model demonstrates the process of movement from initial reaction through to resolution and return to steady state. A drawback of the stage-based model appears to exist in the emphasis on linearity. Resolution of one stage appears to be necessary to facilitate movement to the next; an implication which inadvertently may impose on the bereaved the expectation that all stages must be experienced and sequentially so in order for adaptation to occur.

Grief has similarly been conceptualized as a process involving a
sequence of phases. Based on attachment and object relations theories, Bowlby (1961) views the grief response to loss as instinctually similar to a child's response to the absence of its mother. He proposes a model in which grief is understood as a process of progression through four phases.

As outlined by Bowlby (1961), after the first phase of shock and numbness, grieving individuals enter a searching phase in an attempt to reunite with the lost object, or deceased individual. As does the child in response to the absent mother, the grieving adult engaged in the searching phase characteristically exhibits weeping and angry behaviors during this phase. The weeping is an effort to coax the return of the lost loved one, while the anger expressing the pain of abandonment may be variously directed towards the deceased or others involved. As the hope of reunion with the deceased begins to diminish, a sense of despair ensues. At this point, the bereaved is considered to be engaged in the third phase, described as one of disorganization. As awareness evolves of the extent of the losses accompanying the death, the bereaved begins to experience symptoms of depression. The depressive aspect of this phase is considered adaptive, in that it facilitates the eventual relinquishing of the attachment to the deceased. The process of relinquishment heralds the final stage, in which the bereaved begins to reorganize and eventually form new goals and new attachments.

A subtle distinction appears to exist between the process of movement emphasized in staged-based models and that in phase-based approaches. Where the former model appears to focus on linear progression, the phase-based model appears to emphasize overlaps between phases. The overlapping quality would seem to indicate less clearly differentiated boundaries between phases. Within this system of fluidity, the bereaved may return to a previous phase as a result
of triggers such as unexpected reminders of the deceased.

Critical of the implied passivity of phases as a process to which the bereaved must acquiesce, Worden (1982, 1991) proposes that grief is instead an active process, and one which is responsive to therapeutic intervention. Adaptation to loss is here conceived as a process of mourning within which certain tasks must be completed in order to resolve the crisis of loss.

Worden (1991) poses that one's awareness of the option to take an active part in the grieving process, "can be a powerful antidote to the feelings of helplessness that most mourners experience" (p. 35). The tasks involved in grieving can be simultaneously mediated and are outlined as follows. The bereaved must accept the reality of the loss, a time-consuming task which involves both intellectual as well as emotional acceptance. A further task requires that the bereaved acknowledge and negotiate the pain of grief until that pain itself is resolved; if this task is avoided, the pain may be expressed indirectly in behaviours such as idealizing or villainizing the deceased. Another critical task involves the adjustment to an environment in which the deceased is missing. The nature of this adjustment depends on the nature of the relationship with and the roles played by the deceased. The remaining task involves the emotional relocation of the deceased, an endeavour which would allow the bereaved to set new directions and live fully in the world. This emotional relocation is signalled by an ability to recall the memory of the deceased without the accompanying deluge of intense emotion. Worden (1991) suggests that these tasks may be self-generated by the bereaved individual, or may require professional counselling intervention to promote their completion if the bereaved is experiencing difficulty in entering into the healing process.

Raphael and Middleton (1987) offer a definition of grief which
appears to capture the similar themes that weave through all of the preceeding models of grief. From their examination of the field of bereavement research, Raphael and Middleton characterize grief as,

an initial shock and numbness giving way to distress, yearning and searching behaviors as well as anger and protest as the bereaved experiences the pain of the separation from the loved person; then gradually and increasingly there are sad and even despairing disorganized responses as the finality and irrevocability of the loss become accepted (p. 7).

The definition appears to synthesize many of the commonly accepted phenomena describing the grief response in the field of thanatological literature.

Factors supporting or hindering the facilitation of grief.

Regardless of theoretical standpoint, there appears to be considerable agreement in the literature regarding factors that may either support or hinder the facilitation of grief. One such factor is the role that social support plays in adaptation to bereavement.

Worden (1991) and others (Raphael, 1977; Vachon & Stylianos, 1988) note that it is the perception of social support, rather than the actual support itself, which alleviates the adverse effects of the stress of bereavement. The "goodness of fit" between the actual support offered and the quality of support as it is perceived by the bereaved will be determined by several factors, including the presence of concurrent stressors, personality factors, and the degree of impact of the loss on the various members of the social network (Vachon & Stylianos, 1988). In her assessment of widows in the early weeks of their bereavement, Raphael (1977) noted that one of the most distinct predictors of poor adjustment was the widow's perception of inadequate or nonsupport for her grief. Further, the social support system may have deliterious effects on adaptation to bereavement if expectations are placed on the bereaved that adjustment to the loss is not occurring as rapidly as others expect (Lehman, Ellard, & Wortman,
1986; Vachon & Stylianos, 1988). Raphael and Middleton (1987) conclude that although it is difficult to state definitively how adjustment is facilitated by social support, a review of the literature indicates that several factors may be at play. Interaction which is perceived positively by the bereaved not only provides opportunities for support, catharsis, and making meaning of the event, but also appears to help "the bereaved person to hold a sense of self-worth in his shattered world, where the person perhaps most responsible for giving him a sense of value is gone" (Raphael & Middleton, 1987, p.12).

Another factor affecting adjustment to bereavement is the quality of the relationship between the bereaved and the deceased. A review of the literature suggests consistent agreement that the intensity of grief experienced is positively related to the intensity, or closeness, of the relationship with the deceased. Although it may be assumed that "it is impossible to lose someone you have been deeply attached to without experiencing some level of pain" (Worden, 1991, p. 13), the adjustment to loss may be complicated when there has been a high level of dependency or ambiguity in the relationship with the deceased (Parkes & Weiss, 1983; Raphael, 1977; Worden, 1982). Raphael and Nunn (1988) state that in the case of dependency, the sense of abandonment appears to be much greater, and feelings of anger and protest are subsequently intensified. Similarly though some ambivalence exists in all relationships, in those relationships dominated by powerful feelings of ambiguity the bereaved may have difficulty facing "this negativity because of the guilt that would be involved, so denial or exaggerated idealization of the dead person may appear instead" (Raphael & Nunn, 1988, p. 193).

Planning and participation in rituals signifying the death is another important component in adjustment to bereavement. Worden
(1991) states the funeral ritual facilitates adjustment in several ways. Not only does this formal ritual help to make real the fact of the loss, but it also provides an opportunity for the bereaved to openly express their grief, and draws the social support network close to the bereaved (Worden, 1991). For those bereaved who are not present at the funeral, adjustment to loss may be complicated if they find no other external way to validate the reality of the death (Worden, 1991; Yoder, 1986). Having a part in planning the funeral also appears to facilitate adjustment, as it may provide the opportunity for the bereaved to express symbolically the personal meaning of their relationship with the deceased (Hocker, 1990; Reeves, 1989). Even the informal ritual of how news of the death was conveyed may facilitate or hinder adaptation to the loss; adaptation here seems to depend upon whether the announcement was synchronized with the expectations of the bereaved regarding how revelations of this nature should be made (Raphael & Nunn, 1988).

Correlated with these factors is the individual's physiological response which may variously affect adjustment to bereavement. Stanwood (1992) states that during the first year after a major loss, the immune system is often lowered, leaving the bereaved more prone to infection. A causal link between loss and subsequent mortality in the bereaved is however cautioned by Raphael and Middleton (1987) who state, "While there is now substantial evidence linking behavior and immunity,...direct links of loss-bereavement reaction-immune changes-disease have not been established" (p. 14-15).

**Gendered response to grief.**

There is much debate in the literature regarding the effects of gender on the experience of and reactions to grief. Much of the debate has centred on widowed individuals and which gender, if either, sustains greater difficulties while in the process of grieving. In
their research on the widowed, Weissman and Klerman (cited in Sanders, 1988) state that a likely explanation for the debate is the differential reporting of symptoms between males and females. These writers suggest that widowed females only appear to be more severely distressed than widowed males because males generally report less affective distress and fewer symptoms than females.

This differential reporting of grief responses is further supported by Stroebe and Stroebe (1989-90). They assert that sex norms influence coping styles in each gender, which consequently affects the way in which males and females report grief reactions. They state that in our society, "men are expected to control their emotions,...[and] tend to try to cope alone or seek distraction in their work...[whereas] women are allowed, perhaps even expected, to show their feelings,...[and] turn to others in times of stress" (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1989-90, p. 22). Such norms about the self-control of emotions generally influence the way in which each gender expresses grief reactions and receives social support for the same.

In his review of the literature pertaining to grieving males, Lister (1991) also appears to agree with this differential reporting of grief reactions. He asserts that although the intensity of grief experienced by males may not be overtly expressed, it is nonetheless intensely experienced. Sex norms may also influence the tendency to discuss death and related issues. In their assessment of gender differences in reported attitudes towards death, Da Silva and Schork (1984-85) found that females appear to be more open to discussing death, including the event of their own, whereas males appeared to experience more difficulty in discussing death and death-related issues.

Stroebe and Stroebe (cited in Rapheal, 1987) assert that among other factors, the sex role norms as well as the limited availability
of the buffering effects of social support for men, contribute to
greater risks in bereavement for males than females. They state that
mental and physical illness, depression, mortality and suicide are
experienced to a greater degree by widowed males compared to married
men, versus widowed females compared to married women. Given this and
the preceding assertions regarding what appear to be culturally
dictated sex-norms for the overt expression of grief reactions, grief
may well be experienced differently by each gender. If norms dictate
the way in which each gender expresses grief reactions and receives
subsequent support, then the perception and experience of grief for
each gender may be qualitatively different. In essence, grief may be
a gendered experience.

The state of current research.

The effect of gender on the experience of bereavement is but one
area of contention in the literature. In reviewing the field of
bereavement, Raphael and Middleton (1987) state that despite the
expanding body of literature, current research has failed yet to
clarify and provide systematic data related to aspects of accepted
theories and concepts in the field. Among several observations, these
writers contend that a coherent and empirically supported model of
bereavement has yet to evolve. They also suggest that the validity of
bereavement stages, as well as the essence of bereavement reactions in
the various categories of mourners (e.g., spouse, parent) need to be
addressed. Of several remedial suggestions, Raphael and Middleton
(1987) indicate the need for an increased focus on systematic
phenomenological studies which, in effect, "would be more
representative of the reality of the experience of bereaved people"
(p. 9).

The call for phenomenological research is reiterated by Cowles and
Rodgers (1991) in their review of literature concerning grief within
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the disciplines of nursing and medicine. These authors note that the lack of a specific conceptualization of grief in general often leads to disagreement regarding appropriate interventions in treatment of the bereaved. Cowles and Rodgers (1991) conclude there exists "a need for additional research on grief that utilizes in-depth interviews as a primary source of data....Such research is essential to understanding grief as it is experienced" (p. 125).

Recently, phenomenological studies have begun to populate the bereavement literature. The findings appear to clarify some of those issues raised in the Raphael and Middleton (1987) and Cowles and Rodgers (1991) reviews. The following section will discuss the findings in a sample of phenomenological studies.

Phenomenological Examinations of Grief

The phenomenological approach examines grief as it is perceived and experienced. In an attempt to tap into the lived experience of grief, Carter (1989) conducted open-ended interviews with 30 bereaved adults, 28 of whom were kin and two of whom were friends of deceased individuals. Nine themes associated with bereavement were identified. These were further delineated into five core themes, three meta-themes, and a contextual theme which was found to affect the quality and meaning of each individual's bereavement.

The five core themes describe common experiences which include Being Stopped, or an interrupted ability to feel the pain and comprehend the reality of the loss, and re-enter the usual flow of life's daily events. The theme frequently described through metaphors of physical injury is that of Hurting, which is characterized by intensely painful emotions such as unrelenting sadness, guilt, anger and sorrowful wishing. Though each participant unanimously reported sadness, other emotions such as anger were not reportedly experienced by all participants. A third theme is
described as Missing, and is characterized by an acute awareness of the magnitude of the loss. The theme characterized by selective preservation of aspects representing the deceased is described as Holding, and is typified by such acts as focusing on facets of the relationship which were particularly meaning laden and generally pleasant. The final core theme is described as that of Seeking, which is characterized by a search both for comfort, and for meaning in the loss.

Carter (1989) also describes the meta-themes about bereavement illuminated in the interviews. These themes include that of Change, wherein the experience of bereavement itself changes in quality and softens in intensity, although acute attacks of painful grief could potentially be triggered by some event even years after the death. The experience of bereavement also induced changes in other aspects of the participants' lives such as relationships, behaviours, career plans, and self-esteem (which was often reported to have increased). The second meta-theme, that of Expectations, describes the participants' perception that there exists a socially and personally prescribed way to grieve. The perceived expectations, however, often appeared to contradict the way in which the participant was actually experiencing the grief. The final meta-theme of Inexpressibility involves the participants' perceived inadequacy in finding the words to convey the felt sense of their bereavement.

The contextual theme of personal history, or the meaning of the life and death of the deceased held by the bereaved, underlies all five core themes. Carter (1989) emphasizes that understanding who the deceased was to the survivor is essential for understanding the experience of the bereavement itself.

Carter (1989) compared these themes with the theoretical perspectives on bereavement embodied in the works of Freud, Kubler-
Ross, and various existential writers. She states that several features of the bereavement experience as described by the participants are not apparent in those theories. Among the features of grief which Carter states are uniquely elucidated by the participants in her study are the qualitative changes in grief, including waves of intense pain triggered years after the death; the individual process of holding, or preserving aspects of the existence of the deceased; personal history as a critical factor in influencing the individual meaning and features of bereavement; and social and personal expectations related to how grieving should be pursued, which included the often burdensome expectation that one should experience stages of grief.

Although these features may not be addressed by the theories with which they are compared in Carter's study, several features are aspects of grief which appear to be touched upon by other workers in the field of bereavement. For example, Zysook, Devaul and Click (1982) have described the changing intensity of grief, and noted the potential for intense emotional reactions to occur up to 10 years after a loss. In relation to the preservation of aspects of the existence of the deceased, Lindemann (1944) described some aspects of the holding process and defined the behavior as preoccupation with the image of the deceased. And finally, Parkes and Weiss (cited in Raphael & Nunn, 1988) have referred to the quality of relationship, or personal history, as a significant influence determining the quality of bereavement.

Nevertheless, Carter's (1989) findings support the assertion made by Raphael and Middleton (1987) that no one theoretical perspective on grief appears to comprehensively capture the phenomenon of bereavement. Her work brings to light features of the lived experience of grief that diverge from characteristics outlined in
prevailing theories of grief. For instance, the meta-theme delineated as Expectations describes the burden shouldered by the bereaved whose experience of grief does not correspond to the socially-accepted theoretical "stages of grieving". Here Carter seems to allude to the detrimental effects on individual adjustment if the bereaved and/or the system of supports rigidly adhere to one theoretical prescription of adaptation to loss. Carter concludes that conversely by using as a guide such phenomenologically-generated themes as were outlined in her study, a broad range of unique responses can thus be anticipated to better support the bereaved through their loss.

Carter (1989) included in the group of participants two friends of deceased persons. Given that their experience would include a non-familial relationship to the deceased, the question arises regarding the potential for qualitative differences in their bereavement experience. Because of their limited representation within the sample, and the fact that by virtue of the methodology their accounts were collapsed and combined with the common grief experiences of family members, the potentially unique features of the experience for surviving friends were most likely eliminated.

A final note relates to the elapsed time of bereavement for her participants which ranged from three weeks to 23 years. This appears to be too wide a time frame within which to capture the experience of grief as it is lived. It seems likely that participants who have been bereaved for three weeks will have a limited experience of bereavement, whereas those who experienced loss 23 years earlier may no longer be living the experience of bereavement. Although exact lengths of time for grief resolution cannot be generalized (Worden, 1991), a time frame of two to three years has been suggested by Freese (cited in Floerchinger, 1991) to describe the duration in which grief is experienced most intensely. This general time frame is also
supported by the research of Zisook, Devaul and Click (1982) who state that grief-related feelings, especially those related to dysphoria, peak in intensity within one to two years after the death, although many symptoms of grief appear for some individuals to be present for years.

The observations of bereaved clients by L. Pollard-Elgert (Personal Communication, October 14, 1994) would also suggest this time frame. She suggests that bereavement appears to be experienced most intensely over the first three years since the death. Pollard-Elgert describes the first year as being consumed by the struggle with the reality of the loss, whereas the second year is often characterized by an expanding awareness of the extent of the loss in all aspects of the survivors life. The third year is one in which the survivor begins to envision how a reconnection with life might be possible. Although this process is generally mediated within the first three years, it may take several more years to realize the full extent of the loss and to fully immerse in life again.

The findings suggested by these studies seem to indicate a general time frame within which the experience of grief might be best explored. In order to describe the experience of grief as it is lived, the optimal time within which to explore this phenomena may be within the first three to five years of bereavement.

In relation to Carter's (1989) study, similar themes were illuminated in a recent dissertation by Douglas (1994). Twelve bereaved adults related their experience of bereavement in open-ended interviews. From these interviews, five themes evolved based on categories of predominant feelings. The commonalities of the experience of loss were integrated and bereavement is defined as a loss which:

permeates through the body and soul of a bereaved individual
causing profound emotional and physical pain. A loss of direction, purpose, and identity is experienced, often accompanied by thoughts of suicide. The bereaved are faced with irreversible changes in themselves that are in some cases seen as positive. Loss of a loved one brings to most a deeper sense of spirituality and understanding of life and death, and many bereaved individuals seek to help others who are experiencing pain following the death of a loved one.

The bereavement themes elucidated by participants in this study coincide with various aspects of the themes illustrated by Carter (1989). In addition, there are aspects of the bereavement experience which are uniquely outlined by Douglas (1994). These themes include the occurrence of suicidal thoughts accompanying a sense of anomie, as well as a deeper sense of spirituality, each experienced at some point by most of the participants.

A third study of grief, briefly described here, also serves to demonstrate the ability with which the phenomenological method illuminates the unique as well as universal themes present in the experience of grief. In his phenomenological study, Brice (1991) conducts 12 interviews, separated by intervals of one month, with each of three mothers mourning the death of an infant, young or adult child. While 15 general themes of maternal mourning are delineated, Brice (1991) concludes that the general thematic structure of maternal mourning is characterized by paradox. For example, each participant describes a sense of emptiness that corresponds to her child's nothingness. Paradoxically, this emptiness is experienced as a sense of fullness, or a bursting with grief. Further, each mother "experiences her child as a part of her which she tries to retain but must expel in order to mourn properly" (Brice, 1991, p. 26); she fears her relationship with the child will end if she completes her mourning, yet in order to evade the torment of life without her child, she wishes to erase the child from her memory. Brice (1991) states that eventually the grieving mother comes to accept that she will
never fully accept the death, a comforting resolution which allows her to maintain some connection to her child. Her mourning is structured by "an ambiguity with which there is no straightforward, non-conflicting or non self-deceptive way to live" (Brice, 1991, p. 35).

In describing the complexity of the phenomenon of grief, Brice (1991) states that since "maternal mourning is essentially ambiguous and paradoxical,...and the findings of any study are limited by those profiles of the phenomenon which show themselves... no single investigator could hope to fully characterize it" (p. 35). Brice (1991) here relates the complexity of the grief response. In so doing, he suggests the potent ability of the phenomenological method to define the essence of a phenomenon given the existence of multiple realities.

In considering the common and unique features of grief brought to the forefront by these studies, one of the hallmarks of the qualitative method is illustrated. In the course of in-depth interviews, a wealth of information is obtained which inevitably emphasizes both the "universal and invariant themes" of lived experienced (Brice, 1991, p.23), as well as the unique dilemmas and meanings generated by the presence of multiple realities (Krefting, 1991). As is demonstrated by these studies, in phenomenological research it is not identical repetition which is sought. It is rather the clarification of essential components of a lived experience, and the rich variation within that experience, which the phenomenological investigation seeks to define.

The research by Brice (1991), Carter (1989) and Douglas (1994) expands and enriches the body of bereavement literature by exploring the subjective experience of grief as it is lived. Despite this expansion, however, a review of the literature would indicate that the bereavement reactions and experiences investigated have generally been
those of family members and related kin. There appears to be a gap in the literature regarding the essence and severity of bereavement reactions in the category of grieving individuals who are unrelated to the deceased. A composite representation of grief for these survivors will be described in the following section.

Disenfranchised and Hidden Grief

In reference to the expanding body of literature concerning grief reactions, Doka (1989) observes that "most of the literature has concentrated on grief reactions in socially recognized and sanctioned roles" of bereaved kin (p.1). Despite some debate in the literature regarding which type of loss precipitates the most intense grief reaction, there is widespread agreement that death of a child, spouse, parent or sibling generally activates a protracted grieving response. In contrast, the grief of individuals surviving the death of a close friend is acknowledged yet minimized, a tendency which is reflected in the statement by R. S. Weiss (1988):

The death of a spouse or a child tends to be followed by years of grief; the death of a friend or colleague...tends to be followed by distress and sadness but not by severe and persisting grief....There will not, ordinarily, be pain, pining, search, protracted distress and other elements of grief. (p. 37).

Weiss provides no empirical data however to support his assertion.

Although Raphael (1983) is more tentative in her treatment of surviving close friends, the grief response of this population appears to be indirectly minimized by the amount of text devoted to their experience. In her survey of over 400 published works on bereavement literature, Raphael devotes three lines of text to discussing the grief of close friends. Raphael compares friendship grief to that of conjugal grief and suggests that, "Less intimate partnerships of close friends, working mates, and business associates, may have similar patterns of grief and mourning, but they are likely to be attenuated"
This minimalization of the grief of close friends is similarly echoed Worden (1991) who alludes to friendship grief, but primarily as a means of illustrating how loss in general precipitates existential angst.

There is a growing body of scholarly papers which have recently begun to document the occurrence of grief experienced outside the boundaries of kinship. Doka (1989) and others (Deck & Folta, 1989; Pine, 1989; Kauffman, 1989) argue that the grief of these non-familial survivors is largely unrecognized and unacknowledged. These survivors often experience grief which is disenfranchised, or without social legitimacy.

Doka (1989) defines disenfranchised grief as that which "persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported" (p. 4). It is described as a phenomenon which exists as a consequence of societal norms that prescribe who, how and for whom grieving should be done (Doka, 1989); norms which reserve the definition of bereaved for spouses and immediate kin (Deck & Folta, 1989). While the primary source of disenfranchisement lies in the failure of others to legitimate the grief response in non-kin, disenfranchisement may also occur intrapsychically, wherein the bereaved individual does not recognize his or her own right to grieve (Kauffman, 1989; Pine, 1989). Kauffman (1989) explains that surviving non-kin may themselves fail to acknowledge their own grief as a means of avoiding the perceived judgement of others who might consider the expressed grief as illegitimate or inappropriate.

The bond of friendship is frequently extolled in literature and in popular media. Yet, in spite of the high level of intimacy among friends as compared to many other social relationships, surviving friends are frequently among those who lack a socially sanctioned
right and role to participate in the grieving process granted to kin (Deck & Folta, 1989). They are, according to Sklar and Hartley (1990) a "hidden" population. Though loss of a close friend is generally acknowledged, Sklar (1991-92) contends that this acknowledgement is where concern appears to end.

Deck and Folta (1989) assert that while grief reactions such as angry outbursts, impulsivity and prolonged sadness are generally perceived as part of the normal grieving process for family, this societal tolerance is not granted to friends. In a "society lacking any socially recognizable state of grief for friends", such public display of emotion and dysphoria is generally discouraged (Deck & Folta, 1989, p. 85). Similarly Doka (1989) states "one may spend twenty-five years working side by side with a colleague for forty hours a week and yet be expected to work the same way in that colleague's absence...there is grief, but it is often disenfranchised" (p. 32).

Factors which appear to facilitate the grieving process in general are often unavailable to the grieving friend. In lacking the recognized role of "bereaved", surviving friends are often inhibited from grieving openly (Doka, 1989). As a result, their private experience effectively precludes their access to the crucial component of social support (Doka, 1989; Meagher, 1989; Rando, 1992-93; Sklar & Hartley, 1990). The predicament of diminished social support effectively dictates and is dictated by the unacknowledged grief of the surviving friend.

A serious consequence of this perceived lack of social support is the potential for complicated mourning (Rando, 1992-93). Rando (1992-93) describes this state as a compromised ability to engage effectively in the mourning process. Bereaved individuals without access to support may tend towards denial of aspects or implications
of the loss, or may continue to live indefinitely as if the deceased were still alive. As a result of their complicated mourning, Rando states these bereaved experience prolonged mourning, and have continued difficulty reinvesting in life long after the death of their loved one.

The funeral ritual is another important factor in the facilitation of grief. The funeral provides a public forum within which the bereaved may openly express their grief. For the surviving friend in particular, the funeral may be one of the few opportunities for mutual sharing of the loss. The grieving friend, however, often plays a marginal role in the funeral as that of a supportive guest; except in cases where friends may be asked to eulogize the deceased, they are often not included in planning this therapeutic ritual (Deck & Folta, 1989; Sklar, 1991-92). The grieving friend "has no identity, no role recognition, and no function with respect to the deceased. In effect, the grieving friend is in a state of anomie" (Deck & Folta, 1989, p. 83). As a consequence, the opportunity is denied to publicly express the symbolic meaning of the relationship previously shared with the deceased.

A major repercussion of exclusion from the therapeutic benefits of planning or attending the funeral ritual is the potential impediment to accepting the reality of the loss (Doka, 1989; Deck & Folta, 1989). In considering the grieving tasks outlined by Worden (1989), the inability to accept the reality of the loss potentially hinders the resolution of grief. Without access to the therapeutic aspects of the funeral ritual, the risk is increased for prolonged or complicated grief reactions (Doka, 1989; Meagher, 1989; Rando, 1992-93).

Deck and Folta (1989) explore the institutional policies which limit the role of grieving friends. They indicate that although most places of employment will grant a few hours for funeral attendance,
personnel policies rarely recognize extended absenteeism as legitimate in the event of the death of a close friend. Hospital policies in critical and intensive care units often limit visitation to immediate kin only, and "even the airlines have a definition of acceptable grievers - exchange or refund granted only for death of spouse, child, parent or sibling" (Deck & Polta, 1989, p. 82). Sklar and Hartley (1990) echo these words in their observation suggesting that, "society has almost no institutionalized expectations about the bereavement of close friends. Survivor-friends might be allowed to be unhappy for a short period following a death, but that is all" (p. 106).

Kamerman (1993) posits several factors which might explain the apparent societal and institutional resistance to enlarging the definition of legitimate grievers. He states the threat implied in widening the domain of grievers is that it undermines "exclusivity of the traditional relationship and at least some of the value assumptions on which that relationship is based" (p. 284). Additionally, the amount and intensity of social support afforded to legitimate grievers may be diluted if this resource was to be spread amongst a wider body of mourners. Further, the extension of benefits to friends would not be considered cost-effective. And in considering to whom benefits should be extended, there may be considerable difficulties encountered in gauging the intensity of the relationship and consequent intensity of grief, in contrast to the legal simplicity that kinship and marriage provides. Sklar (1991-92) augments Kamerman's list of factors by suggesting that friends are excluded from bereavement rights as a means of preventing their access to the property of the deceased. He observes that this exclusion allows the family to be unimpeded in its claims to this property.

The institutional negation of the grief experienced by surviving friends does not appear to be universal. Halberg (1986) discusses the
attempts that colleges and universities are making in an effort to address deaths on campus. These institutional efforts are also evident in the literature on bereaved adolescent friends in school settings (Balk, 1991; Brent & Perper, 1993; Podell, 1989). In contrast then, there appears to be a greater deficit in organizational efforts to respond to the grief of friends in the adult population.

This deficit in the social and institutional recognition of the grief of surviving friends is reflected in the limited number of empirical studies exploring this problem. There exists few studies that specifically address the population of adult surviving friends who are grieving the loss through death of a close, platonic friend. Several of the prominent writers in the field of thanatology decry this gap (e.g., Deck & Folta, 1989; Rando, 1992-93; Sklar & Hartley, 1990). They would appear to agree with Doka (1989) who contends that extensive studies "of disenfranchised grief are few. In almost each situation, there is research that should be done documenting the extent and manifestation of grief, the variables that complicate or facilitate grief, and the strategies that seek to ameliorate grief" (p. 332). Although limited in their ability to address these considerations, the following related study as well as two small-scale exploratory studies provide some indication of the grieving patterns of bereaved friends.

Empirical studies of friendship grief.

Park and Cohen (1993) interviewed 96 undergraduate students about their religious and non-religious coping with the recent death of a close friend. A structured interview as well as five questionnaires were used to measure characteristics including the participants' religious orientation; use of religious and non-religious causal appraisals and coping strategies in response to the death; and outcomes such as level of dysphoria. As a result of several complex
findings, the researchers suggest that religiosity as expressed by the belief in a divine plan, plays an important positive role in the coping process. Religiosity did not, however, appear to mitigate all aspects of the impact of the friend's death. Park and Cohen (1993) conclude that while religious individuals may take some refuge in applying a larger purpose to the death, "the negative emotions springing from the loss of another and the continuance of life without the friend are nevertheless present and need to be dealt with over a prolonged period of time" (p. 574). Regardless of the meaning friends make of the death, the study appears to indicate that grief reactions in friends are intense and appear to remain intense for some period of time.

While Park and Cohen (1993) indeed add another piece to the puzzle of the experience of surviving friends, the focus is limited by virtue of the methodology to the role of religion in coping. Little can be gleaned from this research regarding how these mourners experienced and expressed their grief, both intrapsychically and extrapersonally, or how grief was experienced and expressed for those surviving friends who reported to be nonreligious. Furthermore, Park and Cohen (1993) do not explain their rationale for the sole observation of participants who were in the category of bereaved friends. Although it is almost certain that this category of mourner was not chosen on the basis of sampling convenience, these researchers fail to clearly state any assumptions pertaining to their specific choice of this participant group. It is difficult to assess whether the coping responses of these bereaved friends are unique or rather whether they are responses common to all survivors, including spouse and kin. The following exploratory studies partially address these questions.

Sklar and Hartley (1990) describe two small-scale unpublished studies they conducted in an effort to explore aspects of the
bereavement of close friends. Although the reliability and validity of the data cannot be verified due to the unpublished nature of these reports, their preliminary findings are of interest. In their first exploratory study, undertaken in 1985-86, Sklar and Hartley (1990) conducted a project which involved in-depth interviews and essays by participants who had survived the death of a close friend within the previous five years. Participants were students between the ages of eighteen and forty-five. The interview protocol involved questions ranging from the events encompassing the funeral; affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to the loss of their friend; experiences following the death; and the reactions of others to the participant's grief responses. The authors combined the findings from this project with the results of a second project, involving a mutual support group organized by the authors for surviving friends. This latter project included thirteen adult participants who discussed their experience of bereavement as it related to their position of surviving friend.

The authors state that from these studies, "there emerged in the group meetings, interviews, and essays a broad range of themes that closely parallel well-known findings for familial bereavement" (Sklar & Hartley, 1990, p. 108). Specifically, the participants were found to have experienced several constituents associated with familial grief, including a decreased ability to cope, accompanied by a profound sense of loss that lingered for several months and affected their performance in daily matters; anger with the deceased and with themselves; dysphoric sensations, and hallucinations involving the deceased friend which resulted in questioning their own sanity; guilt over things left unsaid; and a tendency for anniversary dates, especially the anniversary of the death, to precipitate intense emotional reactions.
Sklar and Hartley (1990) assert that although participants reported many of the same emotions and experiences associated with grieving family members, these same emotions and experiences are rarely attributed to surviving friends. The findings also indicated that surviving friends often did not themselves recognize the legitimacy of their own grief, and the prevalence of grief amongst surviving friends. In effect, none realized that "friends as a 'category' could mourn, although each had mourned independently. Survivor-friends, it seems, are a hidden population even to themselves" (p. 110). In their concluding remarks, the authors state, we could only find one participant in our research who felt he had been acknowledged by others as truly grieving to the same degree that a family member might. By contrast, other participants who consciously attempted to grieve as might be expected by a family member...discovered they were not "permitted" to do so (p. 110).

Sklar and Hartley's (1990) exploratory studies illustrate the assertions of others (e.g., Doka, 1989) that surviving friends experience features of grief commonly attributed to bereaved family members. Further, this grief is often disenfranchised in that it is rarely acknowledged to have the potential intensity of familial grief. Based on their exploratory findings, the authors suggest the urgent need for more systematic research to examine in depth the experience of grief for surviving friends.

The urgent need to address this situation is repeated by Rando (1992-93) and Kamerman (1993). They suggest that the incidence of disenfranchised grief is increasing as a result of such processes as urbanization, deritualization and reorganization of the nuclear family in contemporary society. Rando (1993) concludes, "the more society creates, maintains, or permits individuals to be disenfranchised in their mourning, the more those individuals are at risk" (p. 54). Although societal recognition of grief in the surviving friend may
prove to be a slow process, Kamerman (1993) is nonetheless optimistic. He states that in a society so reliant on professional expertise, those people who work with grievers, who in effect are advocates for the disenfranchised griever, "are the only ones in a good position to try to bring about those changes" (p. 203).

A review of the literature would indicate widening agreement regarding the reality of disenfranchised grief among various populations of bereaved, including surviving friends. Despite the prevalence of these assertions however, little if any empirical evidence exists describing the lived experience of grief in surviving friends as they themselves perceive it. Assertions regarding the experience of grief among surviving friends have not as yet been empirically verified. The surviving friend remains the prototypical "black box". If the experience of unacknowledged grief is indeed a reality for certain mourners, their reality needs to be defined.

This review has illustrated a selective cross-section of the burgeoning field of bereavement literature. Selected empirical findings, theoretical assertions and models of grief have been reviewed to highlight their contribution to current conceptualizations of this phenomenon. It appears however that a coherent and empirically supported model of grief has yet to evolve. Among many suggestions for remediation, this evolution requires that several gaps in the literature be addressed. One such gap appears to be the limited representation of bereaved non-kin, and more specifically of bereaved friends, in the literature. A second and related area that requires further examination is the subjective experience of grief itself. There exists limited empirical data regarding the meaning the bereaved individual bestows on the experience of grief as it is perceived and lived; hence there appears to be a need for an increased focus on systematic phenomenological studies in order to clarify the
essential elements of this phenomenon as it is experienced by the bereaved.

Through a phenomenological approach, this research seeks to address the essence of grief as it is lived and experienced by surviving friends. It will attempt to make explicit the meanings bestowed on the experience of grief by surviving friends such that the essential elements of the phenomenon as it is experienced by this population can be clarified and described. A major implication of this research is that it will begin to address the conceptual gap in terms of the lived experience of grief for surviving friends. In essence, the circle of legitimately bereaved as implied by representation in the literature may be enlarged to include these non-familial bereaved. Furthermore, if surviving friends indeed experience their grief as partially or wholly disenfranchised, research of this nature may begin to re-establish their legitimate right and role to grieve.
CHAPTER III
Methodology

Foundations of Method

Colaizzi states the phenomenological approach attempts to describe and clarify integral components of a phenomenon, and as such is the critical "first step" in research. Similarly, Karlsson (1993) defines the phenomenological approach as one which aims at describing "what" and "how" something is, rather than "why" it is. He asserts, "the essence of what something is, is epistemologically prior to the question of why such and such is the case" (Karlsson, 1993, p. 14). Given that the essential aspects of the experience of grief as it is lived and experienced by bereaved friends has not yet been clarified, the phenomenological approach will be used to address this problem. Accordingly, Reeves (1989) asserts that in an attempt to study what the phenomenon is, this approach "respects the complexity of a phenomenon, giving it meditative exploration and a thoughtful description" (p. 3).

To further clarify the aim of the phenomenological approach, Karlsson (1993) differentiates between the phenomenal and phenomenological levels of observation, both of which are essential to the process of defining the essential aspects of a phenomenon. The phenomenal level encompasses the straightforward recounting of the subject's experience of the phenomena, "whereas a phenomenological level traces out the structure, or the essential constituents, entailed in the experience, i.e., the logos of the phenomenon" (Karlsson, 1993, p. 14). The researcher is interested in the facts not for their explicit detail but rather for the meanings which are implied in the facts. The essence of the phenomenon lies in the meaning with which these facts are imbued. Fundamentally, the phenomenological approach seeks to illuminate the meaning the
experiencing individual bestows on the experience as it is perceived and lived.

Karlsson (1993) employs the expression "eidetic reduction" (p. 45) to explain the essential process in the methodology. He explains the term "eidetic" stems from the greek word "eidos" which means essence or meaning-structure, and hence "by implementing the eidetic reduction we wish to find out the essence or the meaning-structure of that which we study" (Karlsson, 1993, p. 45). The reduction does not imply that the experience of the phenomenon will be modified in any way. In fact "the meaning of the reduction is quite the contrary. It aims at explicating that which was given (implicitly) in the natural attitude, but never grasped on a thematic level" (Karlsson, 1993, p. 50). By making explicit the meanings suffused in the experience, the essence, or meaning structure, of the phenomenon can be clarified and described. In the process, the themes by which the individual structures his or her world become distinct. As a consequence of this thematization of the meaning structure imbedded in experience, a deeper understanding of that experience is achieved.

Trustworthiness of the Proposed Research

Since criteria of reliability and validity are not appropriate strategies for establishing rigor in qualitative research, Krefting (1991) suggests that every qualitative research report must establish its trustworthiness based on other criteria. Three such strategies for establishing and evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research will be discussed here including credibility, transferability and dependability (Krefting, 1991).

Credibility strategies.

According to Krefting (1991) credibility can be established in qualitative research through the accurate description of the phenomenon as it is perceived and lived by the participants. In the
present study credibility will be enhanced through the use of several criteria as outlined by Krefting (1991). The first of those criteria is described as member checking, wherein participants are given an opportunity to check the transformed data from their first interview to insure that the writer's thematic description accurately represents their experience. This process minimizes the risk of misrepresentation and insures that the multiple realities of the participants are accurately described.

Reflexivity will also be employed to establish credibility. Krefting (1991) defines this criterion as the assessment of the researcher's perceptions, interests and biases on the research process. Reflexive measures will be taken to enhance credibility prior to data collection and analysis. These measures will include that of self-reflection and discussion with others regarding my own presuppositions concerning grief, the experience of grieving, and the identity and roles of the bereaved. These presuppositions will be documented in this chapter. Further, my role as a clinician and health care professional may potentially influence the data collection and analysis: constant reflection will be required to insure that this role does not interfere with my role as researcher and the research itself.

Credibility will also be enhanced through frequent checks of the research process and its findings with my research supervisor. This will ensure that I have accurately described the multiple perceptions of the experience of grief. Such checks will also ensure the validity of the coding scheme I have used to identify common experiential themes.

A potential threat to credibility according to Kirk and Miller (cited in Krefting, 1991) occurs when participants' responses are based on social desirability. To insure against this, I will refrain
from asking specific questions about aspects of the participant's experience. The participant will be encouraged throughout the interview by non-verbal and verbal cues to describe her experience as spontaneously and in as much detail as possible.

Transferability strategies.

Transferability is another strategy towards increasing trustworthiness of the study. Krefting (1991) poses that transferability is established through such criteria as providing dense description of the data in order to allow for "others to assess how transferable the finding are" (p. 220). Descriptions of participants, their backgrounds and the research context itself will be provided in this chapter as well as in chapter V (see Limitations). Numerous direct quotes from the participants regarding their experience of grief will also be provided in chapter IV to further enhance transferability.

Dependability strategies.

Dependability is also a strategy for establishing and evaluating trustworthiness. Strategies to enhance dependability relate to the consistency of findings. Krefting (1991) argues that the qualitative researcher must describe exact methods of data gathering and analysis. This comprehensive description of methods "provides information as to how repeatable the study might be or how unique the situation" (Krefting, 1991, p. 221). In the present study dependability criterion will be established in this chapter (see Data gathering and Data analysis) as well as in Appendices D, E, F, and G which will detail the eidetic analysis of each participants experience.

Dependability of this study will also be enhanced by conducting a code-recode procedure. After a segment of data is thematically coded during the analysis, I will return to this data after a period of 2 months to recode that data and compare the results.
Participants

Participants will be referred to as co-researchers to emphasize the fact that they are influencing the study; co-researchers will essentially generate the data (Reeves, 1989). Co-researchers will have survived the death of a close friend within the last five years. In the interest of attempting to capture potential homogeneity of experience, the co-researchers will be of adult age, ranging from young to middle adulthood (approximately 19 to 60 years of age). The gendered response to bereavement, as suggested in the literature, needs to be taken into account when selecting co-researchers. In the interest of homogeneity of experience, given that women may be more likely to volunteer for in-depth interviews (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1989-90) and may be more open to discussing their experience of bereavement as well as death related attitudes (DaSilva & Schork, 1984-85), I have chosen to interview female surviving friends about their experience of grief.

Four co-researchers will be interviewed. In consideration of time and given the substantial quantity and quality of data which potentially will be generated by each protocol, it is reasonable to assume that this number of participants will be sufficient to trace the structure, or essence, of grief as it is experienced by these co-researchers.

A pre-screening telephone interview will insure that potential co-researchers fit the description of "bereaved close friend" (see Appendix A). This relationship will be defined as a non-sexual companionship, wherein the deceased was considered to be one of the participant's most intimate friends. If the respondent answers affirmatively to the pre-screening question determining whether she would consider the deceased to have been among her closest seven or eight friends, she will be considered a co-participant in the study.
Co-researchers will not normally be interviewed within the first year after the death, when it might be expected that their grief is most intense. This guideline may help to avoid the potential exacerbation of dysphoric feelings which may result from the primarily research-based, versus supportive, nature of the interaction. Further, in order to avoid the misunderstanding of the purpose of the interview as one within which counselling will be provided, potential participants will be advised during the pre-screening contact of the research nature of the study. References for local grief counselling agencies will be given to individuals upon their request if their intention was to receive counselling to facilitate their grieving. If individuals are currently receiving counselling, and are cognizant of the purpose of the research, they may be included in the study contingent on discussing the same with their present counsellor. Finally in the event that the interview catalyses or uncovers unresolved or complicated grief, I will inform the participant of counselling resources available in the city which might hopefully address her bereavement needs.

Data Gathering

Data will be gathered through the use of unstructured interviews, wherein the participants will be asked to "describe the phenomenon in question spontaneously and in as much detail as possible" (Karlsson, 1993, p. 94). Each co-researcher will be interviewed twice, at a pre-arranged time. The first interview will be audio-taped and will last approximately one and one-half hours, contingent upon the co-researcher's indications that she is satisfied with her description of the experience. Interviews will take place in an environment which is agreed upon to be comfortable for the co-researcher, perhaps within her own home.
After the purpose of the study is explained, the consent form is signed. As co-researchers may not be familiar with the design of an unstructured interview, an explanation of the purpose and format of this type of interview will be offered. When the co-researcher indicates readiness to commence, I will begin the interview by stating,

We have talked earlier about the purpose of this study being an attempt to map or define the process of grief experienced by friends surviving the loss through death of a close friend. You have mentioned the death of your close friend and your experience of grieving that loss. I wonder if you would share your story about your loss, beginning if you like with the moment that stands out the most for you.

The story including cognitions and events experienced will unfold according to the way in which the co-researcher experienced, and is experiencing it. The co-researcher will be encouraged throughout the interview by verbal and non-verbal cues to describe her experience as spontaneously and in as much detail as possible (see Appendix B).

The second interview will take place in the same setting. It will be an opportunity to check with the co-researcher to insure that the thematic description of her story accurately represents her experience (see Appendix B). This second interview will require approximately one hour, or less, to complete.

Data analysis

Unless otherwise indicated, the method of analysis employed in this study will be adapted from that outlined by Karlsson (1993), which proceeds in a series of five steps. The collection and analysis of data will progress simultaneously, such that emerging themes can be compared, revised and refined with the addition of each co-researchers story (Reeves, 1989).

Each completed interview will be transcribed, and I will read the drafted protocol until I have a clear understanding of the content.
In this first step of the analysis, the "researcher is open to the text and refrains from imposing any theoretical explanatory model upon it" (Karlsson, 1993, p. 98). Each aspect of the protocol will be reflected upon and understood in the context of the whole of the experience. When I have a clear understanding of the protocol, I will move onto step two.

In the second step of analysis the protocol will be divided into smaller units, each of which signifies a shift in meaning. Each unit of meaning can be perceived as a distinct segment in the gestalt, or contextual whole, of the experience. Karlsson (1993) describes this discrimination of meaning units as a practical aid which helps the researcher to adopt "a concentrated and dwelling attitude on each shift of meaning [necessary for] the penetrating analysis in step 3" (p. 97).

In step three, the analysis proper begins to take place, and is focused on the meaning imbued in the facts. Eidetic analysis, or analysis of meaning-structure, will be employed to track the meaning of the lived experience each subject describes, both implicitly and explicitly, in her protocol. Each unit of meaning is here transformed into the researcher's language. Keeping in mind the contextual whole, through the process of dwelling or reflecting on the possible meanings contained in each unit, the distinct aspects of the participant's experience will be abstracted and eventually transformed into a general meaning. In short, the co-researcher's description of particular facts will be transformed into "a language of meaning" (Karlsson, 1993, p. 99).

In this step of the analysis, Karlsson (1993) emphasizes "it may turn out that two different facts have the same psychological meaning. In addition, one and the same fact may have different meanings on different occasions and/or for different people" (p. 97). Upon
completing the transformation of units of meaning into general meanings, I will proceed to step four in the analysis. As described by Karlsson (1993), step four "entails a synthesizing of the transformed meaning units into a so-called 'situated structure', presented in the form of a synopsis." (p. 106). Here, the units of meaning may be omitted or shifted and rearranged to more clearly define the meaning structure. At this point as suggested by Reeves (1989), I will ask co-researchers to review the transformed units of meaning and the synopsis, or thematic structure, illuminated in their story. This second interview will verify the validity of my interpretations by insuring that the transformed meanings and thematic structure represent the participant's experience.

The final step in the analysis is to condense the common eidetic constituents from the situated structure of each participant's experience into a general structure. As stated by Karlsson (1993), this general or "meaning-structure of a phenomenon is the invariant 'thread' which runs through all diverse manifestations of a phenomenon" (p. 93). The general structure is essentially a definition which describes the essential aspects of the lived experience of grief for all of the co-researchers. Meaning is herein generalized from "one protocol to all protocols in the study" (Karlsson, 1993, p. 111). The definition will effectively embody "all aspects of the phenomenon's essential meaning" (Reeves, 1989, p. 41).

As a final note, Karlsson (1993) indicates that the general structure is the model used when all the situated structures can be meaningfully condensed into one configuration. He suggests that if a study contains more than one structure of the phenomenon, each structure should be preserved as a "typological structure" (p. 93). Such typological structures are indicated when aspects of divergent meanings are found in various protocols; and "to omit such typological
constituents in order to condense the data into one general structure would mean that much psychological relevance would be lost" (Karlson, 1993, p. 88).

A pilot study will be conducted to clarify the methodology, and insure that the experience of grief for surviving friends can be accessed via the proposed method. Meaning units and a thematic synopsis will be illuminated to capture the experience of the co-researcher. If the methodology proves effective, and the data from this pilot study appears to be able to add to the data collected in the study proper, the pilot will be included in the results of the study.

Presuppositions

As stated by Karlsson (1993), the "researcher's understanding of the data is not free from presuppositions...Instead, the researcher's understanding arises from a linguistic, cultural horizon beyond which one cannot move" (p. 89). He defines research as a delicate balance between the researcher's pre-understanding (cultural and linguistic heritage) and a complimentary attitude of attempting to be as presuppositionless and open as possible in relation to the phenomenon being studied. Consequently, to avoid obtaining results which are merely descriptions of the researcher's own understanding of a phenomenon, the researcher must clarify her or his own presuppositions (Karlsson, 1993; Reeves, 1989).

Through self-reflection and discussion with others, I am aware of several of my presuppositions regarding the phenomenon of grief. In being aware of these pre-conceived notions, I hope to avoid then imposing my reality on the experiences of the co-researchers. Additional presuppositions will become clearer as I encounter the data, and as others familiar with the methodology observe my treatment of that data. Throughout the process of the interviews, data
analysis and reporting of results, I will continually reflect on these presuppositions to insure they are not influencing the meanings held by the co-researchers. My presuppositions are listed and described below.

Degrees of disenfranchisement amongst grieving friends

Disenfranchised grief is a phenomenon which may accompany, to varying degrees, the grieving process of a surviving friend. I conceive of grief as being experienced along a continuum of intensity. Several factors influence the intensity of that grief, including the degree to which the deceased fulfilled exclusive functions and roles in the life of the surviving friend; the meanings imbued by the bereaved in the relationship with the deceased, and in the life and death of the deceased; and the survivors' own expectations about grief and bereavement, including their perceived right to grieve. If these factors contribute to some intensity of grief in surviving friends, and if their expression of grief is influenced by assumptions which associate open grief with a healthy grief response but only in family members, then grief may be a private, disenfranchised experience for surviving friends.

The prevalence of disenfranchised grief as stated in the literature appears to be supported by conversations I have had with several individuals who have discussed their personal encounter with the phenomenon. I have recently had an interview with L. Pollard-Elgert, a grief counsellor from the Living Through Loss Society in Vancouver. She referred to the situations of several clients who as surviving friends perceived they lacked the social sanction and support which would have allowed them to openly and legitimately grieve their loss. As a result, they sought the support of counselling to assist them in resolving their turmoil and their grief.
One of the implications of the present research may well be that the interview format itself might be one of the few opportunities for surviving friends to discuss their experience. Telling the story of painful loss may provide emotional relief to survivors (Hocker, 1990; Scurfield, 1985) as well as assist them in bringing a greater depth of meaning to their experience.

Definitions

Bereavement. As defined by Rando (1984), is the state of having endured a loss.

Complicated mourning. Taking into consideration the amount of time since the death, complicated grief as outlined by Rando (1992-93), occurs when there is a failure, compromise, or distortion in the ability of the bereaved to engage in various mourning processes. These denied or distorted processes include avoidance or denial of aspects of the loss, of the accompanying pain, and of the full implications of that loss. The bereaved may also attempt to avoid relinquishing the deceased individual, or readjusting to life without the deceased. When any of these distortions occur in the grieving process, reinvestment in life is interrupted, and the individual is thought to be experiencing complicated grief.

Grief. As defined by Rando (1984), is the process of intrapsychic, social and somatic reactions to loss.

Mourning. As defined by Rando (1984), mourning is a state characterized by responses to loss which are guided or directed by the individual's internalized cultural response to grief.
CHAPTER IV

Results

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will encompass individual elements of each co-researcher's experience of the loss of her close friend. For each co-researcher the situated structure, or synopsis, will be presented first (see Appendix C for definitions of elements or themes; and Appendixes D through G for the eidetic analysis of each protocol).

The second section of the chapter contains an overall synthesis of the co-researchers' experience in the form of a general structure. This generalized description will describe the essential elements of the experience of grief common to all co-researchers in the study (see also Appendix H).

Situated Structures

Anna's Experience of Loss

Nearly 3 years ago Anna suffered the loss of her good friend "N". Anna characterized her relationship with "N" as being similar to that of kin, and she noted similarities between her relationship with "N" and that which she had experienced with her father. For Anna, the relationship with each of them was characterized by protection. She shielded them from aspects of reality which might have caused them offence, and they in turn did the same for her. As such, she wondered if N's deliberate effort to hide the truth of his illness from her was an attempt to protect her from the pain of the reality of his impending death.

For "N" the diagnosis of AIDS seemed to reduce his self-regard. Anna suspected at times that he believed he deserved to die as a punishment for who he was, a thought which she found very difficult to resolve. In spite of the pain of her losses however, Anna remarked on the fact that her own integrity remained intact throughout his
illness and after his death, and she had not been diminished by the intensity of her grief.

Though she would not describe it as typical of her other close relationships, Anna made concessions for her dying friend "N" which required that she restrain her open and genuine expression about his imminent death. She impeded herself from sharing with him her own sense of loss in order to respect his autonomy in how he wished to respond to the reality of his illness and impending death. She sensed he did not want to discuss his terminal condition and its implications. Thus even when his illness was obvious to her she did not confront him when he denied the reality of his condition. After his death however these concessions led to unresolved feelings for her. The allowances she had made conflicted with her conviction that in friendship things should not be hidden or pretended.

Such concessions also led in part to a sense of exclusion for Anna in N's ordeal of illness and death. Her sadness in his loss was intensified by her awareness that despite her knowledge of his terminal illness, she was impeded in discussing it with him until his impending death was imminent. Anna also experienced a physical separation from "N". Before he became ill they were constant companions. Yet when his illness advanced he moved away to later die at his parents home in another city, leaving no specific expectations of his friends regarding his wishes or needs during his illness and after his death.

Anna struggled with whether she would have felt more resolved about his loss if she had insisted that "N" disclose and openly discuss with her the implications of his illness. She resolved however that she could not have insisted on this disclosure. In forcing such discussion she believed she would not have fit with what he needed in a supportive friend.
Anna believed her response to N's loss was typical of what she had expected to experience with grief. She described a sense of anguish, sadness and meaninglessness which were prolonged and intense. And despite many indications that her friend "N" was about to die, she described a continual sense of disbelief in or denial of this end.

She found that certain objects or circumstances seemed to trigger her anguish. Immediately after N's death when her anguish was most intense she could not look at pictures of him in happier times, or be offered condolences from people who knew how close she and "N" had been. Even two years after his death she continued to experience sadness and longing when she encountered symbolic reminders of him, such as tulips in the Spring which he had loved. In order to avoid those thoughts, events or people that she feared would trigger her anguish and longing, Anna found herself seeking distractions or techniques to help her focus her thoughts on the task at hand. She hoped such distractions would "magically" assist her in avoiding the pain of her loss and help her to function with her normal level of competence in her work.

One year ago Anna experienced the loss of "J", another close friend who like "N" also died of AIDS. In contrast to her experience with the loss of "N", Anna described a process of being included in J's experience of illness through to his death. Anna and "J" spoke openly to each other about the significance of his illness and impending death. She spent a great amount of time with her dying friend "J", and was witness to his gradual decline. Throughout this process, "J" earnestly requested her forthrightness in expressing her feelings about his decline and death. Anna was aware of what was needed and desired by her dying friend "J", and stated "there was no second guessing in that friendship". This clarity reduced her sense of confusion not only during his dying process but also after his
death.

Well before J's death Anna was resolved to his loss. She had begun to accept his impending death as an alternative to his anguish over his decline, and his discouragement with no longer being who he once was. She believed that "J" had anticipated and was at peace with his death, which made it easier for others including herself to accept its inevitability. Though she was saddened by his absence, she was at peace with his death.

During his illness "J" had made his expectations explicit, including those regarding others' conduct during his funeral. When asked by J's partner to read her choice of poems at the funeral, Anna was unsure of her ability to read the poem calmly and completely in a way that would emulate her friend's courage. She was able to do so despite her fear of losing composure by reminding herself throughout the reading that "J" did not want his funeral to be an occasion for dredging out the tragedy of his death.

During the time in which "J" was dying, Anna was aware of the effects of illness on his integrity. She recalled that despite J's awareness of others' discomfort with and disdain for his disease and impending death, his self-regard remained intact. He remained true to feeling and expressing what he was genuinely experiencing regardless of others' opinions. With the advancement of his disease however, he became discouraged with the way in which the quality of his life had diminished. He began to look forward to death and the end of his burden. Witnessing J's life dwindle to the point where he no longer wished to live seemed to diminish Anna's discomfort with his death. Rather than experiencing the sadness that she believed others felt with his death, Anna described feeling an incredible sense of pride in the way "J" had attempted for so long to adhere to a way of being despite the adversity of his illness.
In recalling her last visit with "J", Anna described an image she cherished of "J" wherein he was sitting up in bed eating a popsicle. The image seemed to restore his characteristic vitality in the face of impending death, and was one which helped her adjust to his loss. During this last visit with "J" before he died, Anna had an intuitive sense that this would be the last time she would see him. It was a more certain or distinct sense than she had ever experienced with him before. While away she had a dream of which the content led her to wake with the impression that "J" had died during the night, an impression which was later confirmed to be true.

Recognition of her loss and of her status as bereaved was an important aspect in Anna's experience of losing both "N" and "J." In recognizing herself as bereaved and in others' recognition of her as such, she felt entitled to openly expressing her response to her loss and to receiving support. The support of her close group of friends was important especially in her attempt to adjust to the loss of "N." In her anguish she was comforted in knowing that several others shared a similar response to his loss, and understood the intensity of her reaction. Similarly the recognition by others of the legitimacy of her loss was important. During the ceremony wherein J's ashes were spread, she recalled being emotionally moved by the response of the captain of the boat they had chartered who cried while witnessing their poignant ceremony despite knowing neither them nor "J".

At times Anna struggled with the degree of control or influence she had had in each friend's illness and death. She questioned at times whether she had done enough to support them. She believed she should have had the ability to fix, change or predict the course of their illness, and occasionally struggled with her culpability and self-reproach in being unable to do so. She wondered if this struggle with control was a way of quelling the sense of vulnerability that
arose when she was confronted with the inevitability of mortality itself. She acknowledged that the loss of someone close to her had taught her that death is a reality to which no one is immune, and one which can be neither predicted nor controlled.

Anna was generally able to tolerate others' unique responses to the losses of "N" and "J". She was aware of the differences amongst the bereaved in their response to the deaths, and stated though she could accept those differences, "it wasn't a shared experience". Anna also experienced this sense of tolerance in other bereaved individuals towards herself, especially in terms of the way she responded to N's loss. When "N" died, Anna chose not to attend his funeral. Yet despite the fact that it was assumed everyone in N's group of friends would attend, Anna remarked that neither her absence nor that of his other female friends at the ceremony was ever questioned by any of the group members.

In contrast to such tolerance, Anna at times experienced a sense of dissonance in her losses. This discord occurred both when her own response to loss did not fit with her self-perception, and when others' response to the loss was difficult for her to condone. After N's death, Anna found herself wanting only to cry in those first few months and stated that as yet she had not accepted his death. She found these responses inconsistent with a sense of self she described as composed and realistic. Considering herself a normally very competent and influential person, she experienced further dissonance in reflecting on her sense of powerlessness in being unable to influence the fate of either of her friends.

At times she experienced discord with others whose responses to the loss of her friends were dissonant with her own. She found it affronting when one of her friends took pictures at N's funeral and displayed them to the group such that those who were absent from the
ceremony could witness his experience. And after the death of "J", she experienced dissonance with others who insisted she was in denial when they were confronted with the fact that she had already accepted J's death. In contrast to their anguish she felt a sense of peace and pride in her friend's courage.

In her attempt to cope with her losses, Anna found that personally meaningful rituals were important in the process. She found such rites meaningful if they symbolically represented the deceased, her personal relationship with the deceased, or her expectations of what a commemorative ceremony should be. The ritual involving the scattering of J's ashes took place in the company of supportive others and seemed to be a fitting ceremony to represent his life and loss. Conversely, at a wake for "N" which took place in an atmosphere of tension between participants, she found it discomfiting to be expected to view photos of him and discuss him in happy times. In attending this latter ritual she was disturbed by her conviction that this ceremony was not something "N" would have wanted.

Though she had no unanswered questions regarding J's death, Anna found herself searching for a means of making sense especially of N's loss. She found his loss so difficult to explain in part because she had considered him the least likely to be struck by the terminal illness. She hoped for someone to provide an explanation for her that would quell her pain, yet realized the futility of this desire in light of her belief that she could not make sense of N's death because death itself did not make sense.

Anna experienced her response to the loss of "N" and to that of "J" as uniquely individual. In terms of "J", to whom she felt connected in his process of dying and death, she believed she was resolved about his death, and did not feel anguish with his loss. She compared this response to her reaction after the death of "N", in
whose death she has yet to find acceptance and peace. She believed that "N" never accepted his illness or impending death, which left her with a continuing feeling of regret. In light of the fact that "N" died well before "J", Anna suggested that for her, acceptance was not solely a function of time or of familiarity with death. She continued to be struck by the finality of his death, and was angered by the fact that she would never again have the pleasure of his company. In considering the death of "N" and certain other loved ones, she believed that she would never accept their loss, and resolved that death was not something that she would ever become accustomed to.

Natasha's Experience of Loss

Natasha's first experience of the loss of a close friend was characterized predominantly by a sense of exclusion. After the illness and death of her best friend J. in childhood, Natasha was denied access to attending her funeral. The significance of Natasha's loss was not recognized or acknowledged by others, and she was effectively excluded from bereavement status.

Natasha considered "J" someone with whom she felt equal and very close. She believed the circumstances surrounding J's death were very significant in terms of her present response to loss. Though she was aware of extenuating circumstances which may account for the following, Natasha suspected that her exclusion from bereavement status with J's death may have impacted her life to the extent that she developed a pattern of being unable to fully acknowledge and process her feelings related to loss. In effect, the exclusion had attenuated her ability to fully grieve.

Natasha described an event which some years later triggered an intense sense of anguish for her. While working as a chaplain in palliative care she briefly met a woman whose death affected her so profoundly that she experienced anguish, confusion and depression with
an intensity she had never before encountered. In considering the meaning of her response she stated "in a lot of ways I felt as though I was really grieving for myself. But I also think that she was the trigger for a lot of accumulated deaths that I had experienced". Since she had not shared a significant relationship with this woman, the intensity of Natasha's reaction to her loss was initially bewildering. She wondered if the woman's death had allowed her through symbolic means to deeply and completely experience the feelings which she had been previously unable to do with her more significant losses. She stated that thereafter she understood the relieving and cleansing effect that other triggers such as movies could have. For Natasha, such triggers allow the bereaved to channel their grief when no other appropriate format exists for them to otherwise legitimately do so.

Her sense of exclusion with J's death resurfaced with the recent and unexpected death of J's brother. Natasha had planned to contact him for some time, but was unable to do so before his death. With his death, she was denied access to information that she believed would have assisted her in resolving issues and recovering memories from the part of her life she had shared with "J".

Natasha again described a sense of exclusion with the death of her friend "L", who died 1 year ago. She had been very close to "L" for most of her school years, and they remained friends until L's death. There had been times in their relationship when there were gaps in communication due to distance and different life phases. Natasha was thus not aware of the recurrence of L's cancer until it was very advanced. She experienced a sense of shock upon hearing that her friend was ill with recurrent cancer, and had been so for 2-3 years by the time the news was disclosed to her. In learning further of the tragic circumstances surrounding L's illness, she also experienced an
overwhelming and simultaneous sense sadness and anger.

"L" had been living and hospitalized in another province. During Natasha's final visit with "L" before her death, she found it incredibly frustrating that by the time she actually saw her friend she was so close to death that she was no longer present or accessible. For Natasha, it was as if her friend "was already in another world...and had succumbed to death". She also experienced a feeling of dissonance with others whose response to the impending loss of "L" was difficult for Natasha to tolerate. In light of her need to openly acknowledge the approaching loss of "L" and its implications, she experienced great frustration with others, including "L", who continued to deny the reality of L's death despite its imminency. Through her efforts to understand the motivation behind this denial, Natasha was eventually able to tolerate such responses. In recognizing that "L" had fought death for so long in order to stay alive for her young son, Natasha was able to endure the denial.

During this visit Natasha struggled with her ability to influence her friend's painful process of dying. She tended to L's physical needs and was able to make contact with "L" through the act of massaging her feet. This act symbolized for her the bond of their friendship, and was empowering for Natasha who believed that regardless of her friend's diminished level of consciousness the act would be something "L" could sense and appreciate. This final and only visit with "L" before her death was one of Natasha's most treasured memories. In being present with her friend and caring for her physical needs, Natasha gained a sense of inclusion, a sense of being able to participate in and ease L's dying process.

During her last visit with "L", Natasha had been aware of a level of superficiality that dominated their conversations during L's moments of lucidity. She conceded that the superficiality of this
last contact had actually characterized much of her relationship with "L". Despite her requisite for depth and intimacy in her relationships formed in adulthood, her loyalty remained constant to her dying childhood friend. Though the depth of their bond had been circumscribed by extenuating circumstances in their youth, she realized this bond had provided her with a sense of belonging and support during those years. She recognized that their friendship had been sustained throughout by the strength of this bond which remained intact despite their physical distance and often very different perspectives in life.

In the months before L's death, Natasha had resigned herself to the inevitability of her loss and believed she grieved more before L's death than after. In her attempt to cope with the reality of L's impending death, Natasha found expression for her feelings of loss in her music and in her art. During this time she was particularly moved by the music of an artist whose songs seemed to be addressing a loved one who was dying. She learned to play these songs, and repeatedly played the one which most resonated with her own experience of losing "L".

Upon receiving word that "L" had died, Natasha experienced an initial sense of numbness. She described this numbness as in part a mixture of sadness that L's life had ended, and relief in that death was a positive alternative to the months and years of suffering her friend had endured. In reflecting on L's struggle, Natasha was aware of the effect the illness had had on the integrity of her friend. Amidst the sadness of her loss, Natasha felt a sense of pride in her friend's courage to battle for her life for so long in spite of her recurrent illness.

Natasha questioned whether more could have been done to have saved L's life. Before L's death, she experienced great frustration in
learning that "L" had been discouraged by her doctors in seeking treatment at a centre where Natasha was aware that promising possibilities existed for treatment. In learning of her friend's illness too late, Natasha was powerless to influence the situation. She was angered by the fact that "something could have happened and the circumstances didn't transpire". She was confronted by the finality of death; an important tie to her past, that which had sustained her in her youth, was gone.

The sense of exclusion Natasha had experienced during L's illness was again heightened by a letter she received from L's twin sister, with whom Natasha had also been close for many years. Natasha disclosed in a previous letter to L's sister the issues that she had been struggling with since L's death. In response, she received a letter which for Natasha had the effect of invalidating her pain and loss. It was a response which indicated to Natasha that she would be impeded in further discussing her loss with this friend. After working through the pain of her loss within her own support group, Natasha was able to tolerate the disenfranchisement she had endured with L's sister. She recognized that her friend had not yet begun to grieve the loss of her own sister, and had continued to deny to herself the significance of her loss.

When her pain was discounted by L's sister, Natasha sought other avenues through which she could openly explore and clarify the meaning of L's loss. She gained a sense of inclusion in terms of being enabled to openly discuss her experience of loss through her own support group. There she was given the latitude to struggle with her pain and the issues surrounding her loss. Her sense of inclusion was also heightened by the development of her friendship with "K", L's daughter. After L's death, Natasha contacted K. to offer her support and acknowledge her loss. Through their open discussion of L's loss
and its implications, Natasha had the experience of connecting at a
deep level with "K". It is a connection that continues to gain
depth as they resolve their experience of loss.

Natasha found the freedom in her support group to fully express
what the loss of "L" had meant for her. She described her experience
stating, "only when I was able to feel the fullness of what I needed
to feel, and to go to the depths of the despair that was there and to
acknowledge that, and to be in that really lonely place was I able to
then let it go and emerge in a new form". In so doing, she recognized
that through her friendship with "L", she had obtained in her youth
that which for her symbolized support, family and belonging. She
began to realize that her experience of the loss of "L" may have
potentiated a parallel need to grieve the absence of her own natural
family in her life. She had considered "L" and L's family to be her
real family, and wondered if in grieving for "L" she was also grieving
the loss of the birth family she never had. Through this process of
acknowledging the meaning of her relationship with "L", she further
confirmed the extent of her loss and the legitimacy of her bereavement
status.

Natasha searched not only for a means of making sense of her
losses, but also for a way to grieve the death of her friends that
would honor the meaning their lives had embodied. Natasha was
conscious of a long established pattern wherein she found herself
unable to immediately and fully acknowledge and experience her
feelings related to the loss. Two years after L's death, Natasha
questioned whether she had grieved for her friend as completely as she
believed she should. She recalled a character in a film whose
response to the loss of a close friend moved her so deeply that she
has since wished to emulate this ideal in her own experience of loss.
She stated that in her response to loss she would wish to "grieve the
loss at the time it happened... and acknowledge the meaning of the deceased... [in order to] honor them by carrying that and channelling what was special about them in your own life".

In her attempt to meaningfully resolve the loss of her friends, Natasha reflected on the ways in which she had adapted to other losses. She identified meaningful rituals as important factors in her ability to resolve those losses. After being impeded as a child in attending J's funeral, Natasha watched the ceremony from the school yard fence. She believed that at least having witnessed the ceremony was significant in legitimizing her experience of J's loss. She recalled having created a funeral ritual for a dead bird some time after J's death, and wondered if this was an attempt in her childhood to symbolically commemorate J's life and put her death into perspective. Years later as an adult she returned to her childhood home and went to places that had been significant. She believed that having taken a picture of J's tombstone was an important step towards resolution.

She stated that creating a ritual enabled her to honor the meaning of the deceased. In so doing it allowed her to "let go of whatever [she seemed] to be hanging onto about that person's death". Natasha recognized that aspects of L's loss remained unresolved for her, and she needed to create a ritual that would allow her to commemorate the meaning "L" had embodied. She realized however that at present she was not yet ready to do this.

In conjunction with ritual, she also described the creation of artwork as an avenue which in her adulthood enabled her to access the feelings that she had difficulty acknowledging and fully experiencing in her loss. The process of writing was another way in which she commemorated the life and meaning of the deceased. It was through this latter process that she was able to begin to work through the
loss of "L". When "L" died Natasha could not justify another long journey to attend the funeral. Instead she took pains to compile for the service and L's family a multi-page card which acknowledged all that "L" had meant to Natasha over the many years of their friendship.

Natasha questioned whether her response to loss itself was unique in relation to the way in which other bereaved individuals respond. Though she believed her ability to grieve was characteristically attenuated, she resolved past losses in part through such acknowledgements as ritual, writing and displaying pieces of artwork which capture the meaning of that particular deceased individual. She was uncertain whether such acknowledgements would be made by others in their experience of loss, but believed such had been helpful in her own process of attempting to resolve her losses.

Similarly, she questioned whether her response to L's loss would be unique in relation to her response to losses she may suffer in the future. She compared the lesser degree of intensity attained in her friendship with "L" to her more recent relationships through which she has "connected at deeper levels with people". In considering her growing ability to attain greater depth in these relationships, she speculated that her response to these losses in relation to her present experience with the loss of "L" would be unique, and one in which the depth and fullness of her grief would correspond to the depth of connection she had thus established.

In considering the way in which she has grieved for "L", Natasha stated that in some respects she has been able to grieve in the way she believed she should for her friend. Through such means as the memorial card she composed and sent to L's family after her death, she believed she had begun to acknowledge and channel the meaning of her friend's life. In considering such, she wondered if she was more completed in her grieving and in accepting L's loss than what she had
thus far realized. Though she believed she needed to bring some final closure to the process, she questioned if she had not already experienced the depth of grief for "L" that she believed she essentially would experience.

In reviewing her experience of L's loss, Natasha concluded that the emotional impact of death on the bereaved may be recognized to some degree by others. She believed however that the significance of the death is soon lost in the intensive, frenetic lifestyle of a culture that honors performance and denies grief. She suggested this denial exists for all loss including that of a family member, but is intensified when the loss is that of a friend.

Carla's Experience of Loss

Carla described a long history with "S", a close friend who took her own life nearly 2 years ago. They had known each other since they were babies, and had lived next door to each other for much of their lives sharing most all of their childhood and youth experiences. As young women their friendship continued, although their closeness fluctuated with the waxing and waning of S's struggle with psychiatric illness in early adulthood.

Before the onset of illness, Carla believed "S" had the potential to successfully do whatever she aspired to in life. Initially during the 6 years of S's illness Carla maintained hope that "S" would recover, encouraged by her belief in her friend's talent and potential. When "S" became ill, Carla spent time during her friend's increasingly unstable periods offering support and hope for her recovery. However as S's disease advanced and she watched her friend become diminished and destabilized Carla began to believe she was witnessing the decline of terminal illness. Her hope began to diminish as she resigned herself to the inevitability of S's fate. She found herself beginning to accept her impending loss well before S's actual
death. She believed the illness had not only begun to erode S's character but also the integrity they had shared in their friendship. She often found herself exhausted after their visits and felt she was getting little in return for the energy she was putting into their friendship. It had become obvious to her that in the final years of their relationship "S" was determined primarily to end her own anguished life.

Aware of their diminished intimacy, Carla attempted to maintain the friendship's integrity by avoiding the use of her psychiatric knowledge to influence "S" during their time together. During visits with "S", she maintained what she described as the role of a friend, and focused on happy or neutral topics in order to remind "S" of the joyful aspects of life. Though Carla often worked extra shifts on the psychiatric unit, in order to avoid further discouragement and sadness in seeing her friend there, she refused to work shifts on that unit when "S" was admitted.

Carla maintained her support for "S" in the face of an illness that others found disturbing, and in spite of S's diminished ability to be an equal partner in their friendship. She believed she was able to make such concessions as a result of the bond she shared with "S". She believed that her professional knowledge also helped her to better understand S's plight and found herself experiencing dissonance with others whose approach to S's illness seemed to interfere with her recovery. She was frustrated with the seemingly counterproductive attempts of others to augment S's therapy, and angered by those who took advantage of S's vulnerability by recruiting her during her illness into an unfamiliar faith.

While Carla was away on holidays, "S" took her own life. Without knowing the reason for her sense of urgency, Carla had a strong sense that she and her family should return home early from their holidays.
Upon their arrival she was informed that her friend had died and the funeral was scheduled for later that day. It was a memorial she considered important to attend yet would have missed had she not heeded her intuitive sense. Though she found the intuition unnerving, she believed that the close bond she shared with “S” had inexplicably drawn her home for the funeral.

During S’s open casket funeral, Carla refused to view her friend lying in state. She instead chose to remember “S” in her vitality and companionship. An image which continued to stand out for Carla was that of her friend transformed as an angel at the moment of her death. This image was comforting for Carla. It symbolized for her that her friend had finally found the peace which she had been long struggling for.

The formal ritual of S’s funeral was an unsettling experience for her. It failed to acknowledge the positive effect “S” had had on the lives of Carla and others. Its proceedings were extremely unfamiliar to her, further frustrating her expectations for a ceremony that would meet her needs for closure. In contrast, the evening spent with bereaved friends immediately after the funeral was for Carla a more fitting ritual. It commemorated S’s life through the mutual sharing of personal remembrances of her. This latter ritual and that of the funeral (despite its shortcomings) took place in the company of supportive others, and Carla recognized such rituals as important opportunities for her to share her grief and have it acknowledged by others. She believed that had she missed these gatherings, she would have felt more isolated in her loss.

Rather than experiencing shock with the news of S’s death, her sense of shock and disbelief were related more to the strength of her own intuition that urged her early return from holidays in time to attend her friend’s funeral. Carla recognized that despite having
been prepared for her friend's inevitable death, she nonetheless experienced a sense of numbness as a result of having had little time to absorb the news before the actual funeral. She felt unprepared for the memorial and recounted the day of the funeral as one of the worst in her life. She described a sense of being on "automatic pilot" for some time after the funeral. When the numbness dissipated it was replaced by a sense of anguish and longing which seemed to be triggered especially during times when she was alone or engaged in tasks which did not require her total concentration. Later in her bereavement she found that anniversary dates such as S's birthday and the date of her death also triggered her anguish.

In the first several months following the death of her friend, Carla experienced a sense of exclusion or isolation in her bereavement experience. This exclusion was generated primarily by her belief that the meaning and extent of her loss would not be understood by those who did not know "S" when she was healthy. She believed few would comprehend the level of intimacy their friendship had reached, and resolved initially that she could speak with no one about her loss. She experienced her restraint as a burden and stated "I kept it all to myself....I really didn't think I had permission to talk about my grief". Her close friends who were also grieving the loss of "S" lived far away and were not always accessible, which further exacerbated her sense of isolation.

Carla also experienced a sense of dissonance in restraining herself from openly discussing her experience of loss after S's death. She perceived herself to be very forthright in discussing and resolving her issues, yet in this situation of loss she felt impeded in her ability to resolve it. This feeling of discord was heightened by her sense of being torn between longing for the return of her friend and admitting that it was only in death that "S" found the
peace she had wanted.

When Carla realized that her friend would never again be there to share birthdays and other special times, she was struck by the finality of death itself. She experienced loneliness and longed for someone with whom she could share her sadness. Though she had friends who met other needs, she realized that the unique history and characteristics that typified her bond with "S" were irreplaceably gone.

Amidst her anguish after S's death Carla also experienced anger with her friend. Given the integrity she believed her friend had possessed in her health, she found it difficult not only to tolerate the means by which S had chosen to end her life, but also the way in which others in the community had sensationalized that choice. It was difficult to accept that given S's intelligence, and despite such intelligence, "S" must have clearly known that it would be her parents who would make the painful discovery of her lifeless body in their own home. Carla was eventually able to make sense of S's act and accept it by attributing her motive to desperation rather than selfishness.

In adapting to her loss, Carla found helpful the creation of her own private rituals. Though she assumed it customary to wear black to the funeral she chose to wear colourful clothing instead because she believed it better represented her vibrant friendship with "S". And later in her bereavement when she found herself constantly dwelling on S's death and struggle with life, she created another ritual to honor the joy her friend's life had also embodied. She resolved to engage in a ritual each January, the month of S's birth, wherein she would set aside time to purposefully focus on the positive and happy memories of S's life.

Recognition of the extent of her loss and of her status as bereaved was also an important factor in Carla's adaptation to her
loss. The support of those close friends who had known "S" when she was healthy was paramount for Carla. She did not expect support from those who did not know S well but cherished such support when it was received. She was impressed by the generosity of the wife of a friend whose hospitality made it possible for Carla and other bereaved friends to gather and offer each other support in their loss.

In the initial months after S's death Carla struggled with recognizing herself as legitimately bereaved. She attempted to quell her pain by diminishing the importance of her loss. She found herself in times of anguish repeatedly attempting to convince herself she had "only lost a friend". Only after agreeing to be interviewed about her experience of loss did she give herself permission to acknowledge to herself and others the full extent of her loss rather than deny its legitimacy. She experienced relief in allowing herself to do so, and stated "now I know that friends are allowed to grieve and will grieve".

Upon acknowledging the legitimacy of her own loss, Carla realized that her close friends, separated from her and each other by distance, were likely feeling as isolated in their grief as she had been in hers. She resolved to share her feelings about her loss of "S" with them, and invited them to share the same. She made the offer as a means of legitimizing both their experience of loss and their entitlement to support. In so doing, Carla found that her previous sense of isolation began to dissipate.

Though she found affronting some responses of others to S's death, Carla was generally able to tolerate individual autonomy in terms of others bereavement responses. She described the response of a mutual friend who rescinded her support of "S" well before the latter's death. Though she did not condone it, Carla accepted this friend's response by resolving that by virtue of her upbringing this friend
could not have been expected to respond differently to S's behaviour.

Carla described as uncanny the occurrence of certain unlikely events which helped her adapt to her loss. She described the first such event as occurring during S's funeral where in the midst of her anguish she was able to experience the unexpected support of a close mutual friend of herself and "S" who uncannily happened to be in town at the time of S's death and funeral. Several months later Carla experienced another event which helped her further adapt to her loss and to resolve aspects of the loss with which she had been struggling. Some time after S's death, Carla was the sole person to intervene in the attempted suicide of one of the patients on the ward. Later that night she had a dream which connected this patient's attempt at suicide with the death of S. In attempting to make sense of the dream she concluded that despite never having taken conscious responsibility for S's outcome, she believed that at some level she was struggling with her culpability in it. She was unnerved by the ability of her unconscious to force her to make meaning of aspects of the loss which she had previously avoided addressing. The dream helped her to recognize that aspects of S's death, such as her responsibility to intervene, had remained unresolved and she needed thus to talk about her experience of loss in order to resolve such issues. She found the dream comforting in that after making sense of it, she became more resolved in believing she and others had done everything they could to save S. Her friend's death was ultimately her own choice. Though she acknowledged that thoughts about her responsibility may recur in the future, she was comforted in knowing that everything that could have been done was done to save her friend.

In reflecting on her experience of loss, Carla suggested that for her the loss of a close friend was primarily a uniquely personal experience. She believed that in contrast to the loss of a family
member wherein there are some commonly accepted meanings associated with the loss, the death of a close friend is difficult for the non-bereaved to relate to specifically because the particular level of intimacy attained is not a given. She stated that others are generally unaware of the level of intimacy a particular friendship has attained. She concluded that the meaning of the loss of a close friend was one which could only be clarified privately or through the assistance of someone who could allow the bereaved to explore the experience without interference.

Though painful memories of S's years of struggle had initially predominated Carla's thoughts, she was eventually able to manage an increasing ability to focus on memories of "S" in happier healthier times. Carla stated that two years after S's death she did not have to deny the painful memories but could choose more wilfully not to focus on them. She no longer felt anguish but simply missed her friend's presence. She believed she had completed what she considered stages of loss, and was finally at peace with her friend's death. She was grateful that S's struggle with the pain in her life had ended. Her friend had finally found in death the peace that had eluded her in life.

Diane's Experience of Loss

Diane discussed the loss of four close friends who had died over a span of several years in her adult life. With each death she gained a greater depth of meaning in the loss. During these years she was also intensely involved with her ailing mother who died when Diane was 26, and her dying grandmother whom she lost 14 years later. Her experiences with them in their processes of dying and death largely enhanced her ability to cope and find meaning in the deaths of her friends. Since aspects of her experience with her dying family members have informed her perception of loss, such aspects will be
included in describing her experience of grieving the deaths of her close friends.

Diane's first experience with death was with the sudden loss of her friend "A", 21 years ago. During the brief disabling illness that culminated in his death, she was emotionally overwhelmed by his deterioration. She found herself unable to be with him before his death, and long after experienced disappointment in herself for this self-imposed exclusion. For some time after his loss, Diane denied the reality of the fact that he would never return. She experienced a sense of dissonance in this confrontation with death and could find no meaning in it. At this early point in her life she was unfamiliar with death and had not yet acknowledged the reality of its existence. She remained unable to make sense of his death until after experiencing the loss of her own mother.

Her intense involvement with her mother's process of dying helped her to accept the reality of death and find meaning in it. Whereas her exclusion from A's process of dying had denied her access to such meaning, she witnessed in her ailing mother a sense of spiritual illumination or transcendence in the midst of her deterioration. Through her inclusion in her mother's experience of dying she resolved there existed peace in death, and the dying welcome it as an end to their suffering. She began to perceive of death as an awe inspiring mystery. And since this experience she has looked for and sensed this spiritual aspect of death in all the losses she has endured.

Through her experience with her dying mother, Diane developed a pervasive desire to understand the experience of death and dying. Her need to understand and support this process allowed her a sense of inclusion some years later in her friend J's experience of dying. While being treated for a life-long chronic illness her friend had contracted a disease which was terminal. Her ability to support him
in his struggle allowed Diane and J. to openly and continually discuss his illness and impending death, and the implications it held for each of them. As a result of this inclusion, the closeness in their friendship deepened during his lengthy illness until his death, nearly 9 years ago.

Diane was inspired by the adherence to a purpose of being that characterized her friend's life throughout his struggle with chronic and terminal illnesses. He confided to her that in having lived with a chronic illness which involved frequent hospitalizations, he had grown up with the reality of dying. He believed this perspective helped him to bear and accept the present reality of his terminal illness. His resignation to death and longstanding courage in the face of its inevitability helped to facilitate her own acceptance of his impending death.

"J" died after a night of agonizing pain, and had cut his wrists seemingly in the midst of his agony. As with her friend "A", Diane again experienced a sense of dissonance with her loss. Her discord was associated not with the reality of his death itself but rather with the way in which his life may have ended. In light of the stoicism she felt he had possessed, she had great difficulty resolving the fact that he may have taken his own life and struggled to make sense of this for some time after his death. Her sense of dissonance was intensified by learning after his death both of the unnecessary suffering he had endured in his family throughout his childhood, and the fighting that had ensued between his family members over his assets after his death. She felt confronted by what she described as the unfairness of life.

Diane struggled with issues of control especially around J's sudden loss. Though she had been resolved to J's inevitable death, she found herself unprepared for how suddenly his death actually
occurred. Her sense of vulnerability was heightened by her struggle to cope at the time of J's death with the failing health of her father and grandmother, and the impending death of the latter. Challenged by the vulnerability of their mortality, she found herself overwhelmed and stated "I didn't go and scatter J's ashes because I didn't think I could face it...it was just too much".

Several years later Diane was again confronted by this vulnerability with the loss of her friend "D", who died 4 years ago suddenly and without warning. She described having experienced a sense of great shock and disbelief in his death which lasted long after his funeral. She struggled for some time with the seeming meaninglessness of his death, and recognized that her trial was due in part to being completely unprepared for his loss.

Her experience of D's loss was further shaped by events which led her to feel intense dissonance. Amidst the pain and confusion of her loss, she was enraged by another mourner whose exploitative actions impinged on the abilities of Diane and other bereaved to openly and fully experience and share their grief. She felt offended that this mourner would advance her own needs at the expense of other bereaved who wanted only to honour and acknowledge their loss. Diane's sense of discord was heightened further yet by an image of D's young daughter whose last memory of her father was that of him fighting with her mother. She was saddened in knowing that this conflict would be his daughter's final memory of him.

She believed his sudden death had robbed "D" and those close to him of the chance to say and do what was needed to bring a sense of resolution to his life. She was left with a sense of being excluded from his dying and death. With his death she recognized she lacked the spiritual feedback that she had received through her inclusion in her mother and J's processes of dying; feedback which she believed was
an important factor in finding meaning in and accepting the loss.

Her sadness and inability to find meaning in his death seemed prolonged to her, and she found that an intense sense of these appeared to be triggered by various circumstances such as encountering strangers who resembled her deceased friend. In her struggle to make sense of his death she sought the advice of "J.H", another close friend who himself was dying of a terminal illness. In his responding letter "J.H" discussed the degradation he experienced through his physical deterioration, his fear of total incapacitation and dependence, and his impossible challenge to make sense of his approaching death. He suggested that because "D" had not expected his own impending death he was enabled to live his life fully and without such struggle until the moment of his death. In reviewing the letter, Diane believed that it more than anything helped her to cope with D's death.

Recognition of her loss and of her status as bereaved was an important factor in Diane's adjustment to her losses, including D's. With each death, she clarified the extent and significance of the loss through the act of reviewing who her friend had been in life and what he had meant to her. With each loss she considered herself legitimately bereaved. However with D's death she was aware that the full extent of the loss suffered by herself and others could not be acknowledged because many of the bereaved were simply unaware of the depths of each other's connections to "D". In order to address the situation, Diane made efforts during and after his funeral to seek out such bereaved and acknowledge the mutual loss.

In her attempt to adapt to his loss and further rectify the disenfranchisement she witnessed, Diane found helpful the creation of a personally meaningful ritual. She supported the creation of a memorial fund which would support a workshop offered annually in his
area of speciality. She then encouraged those less recognized bereaved individuals to assist in its co-creation. She conceived of the memorial not only as a means of honouring "D", but also as an avenue through which the disenfranchised bereaved could receive support and invest the energy from the pain of their loss into something positive.

One year ago Diane lost a fourth close friend, "J.H", who died after enduring a terminal illness for several years. Her initial experience of his impending loss was characterized by a sense of exclusion. She had been aware of his terminal illness well before he disclosed it to her and during this interim she felt impeded in her need to openly discuss with him his impending death and its implications. She found herself painfully restraining her anguish in his presence.

After his disclosure of his illness, she gained a sense of inclusion in his experience of dying. She was intensely involved in his care to the very end of his life. Throughout this time together they openly discussed his illness and the significance of his loss. Her involvement in his experience deepened their friendship, and assisted her sense of acceptance in his loss. Although Diane was intensely dedicated to assisting "J.H" in his dying process, she allowed others autonomy in their own response to his illness and approaching death. She encountered several mutual friends who for various reasons could not offer him their support and tolerated their inability to be involved despite her own compelling commitment to him.

She witnessed in her friend "J.H." an integrity that remained intact despite the adversity of his debilitating illness. He had confided to her that his mounting incapacitation challenged his ability to continue to fight for life, yet he adhered to the purpose
of living the remainder of his life with dignity and accepting his
death with that same dignity. And though the loss of her friend was
extremely painful, her own integrity remained intact throughout his
dying process. She felt proud of her ability to commit to his care
and offer support in spite of her own sorrow.

Before departing on a holiday, Diane experienced in her last visit
with "J.H." a strong sense that his death was imminent. Her intuition
was confirmed by his partner. In having this reality confirmed, Diane
and "J.H." were given the opportunity to say a final goodbye and
assure each other of their love for one another. She believed they
were able to let go with peace and resolve.

While she was away she experienced a sensation wherein her long­
standing anxiety about "J.H." was suddenly diminished, and was
replaced by a feeling of peacefulness. She sensed that "J.H." had
finally let go of life. Her instinct was later affirmed when she
learned that her friend had died at the same moment in which she had
felt a sense of peace.

In the weeks surrounding his death Diane felt she needed to do
something positive with the energy from her anguish. Again she found
the mechanism of ritual important in helping her adjust to J.H's
death. After his funeral in the company of other bereaved who were
also close to "J.H.", she participated in a ceremony wherein his ashes
were scattered over the ocean. She and other mutual close friends
also donated a bench in his honour to a local park.

After his death, she recognized that through her intense
involvement in his dying process she had impeded herself from enjoying
her own life. She had felt that while he was suffering she could not
herself continue to live fully. During his illness she did not want to
burden him with her own sorrow, and made a further concession of
resolving not to cry while in his presence. After each visit she
would allow her sorrow to surface and cried while alone in her car on her way home. Though she did not regret her concessions she believed she paid a toll for her intense support in having blocked her own experience of joy before his death. She was aware that after his death, she felt the relief of being able to continue to live fully again.

Diane described her experience with the loss of her grandmother several years earlier and that of "J.H." as similar in terms of "the long term and the preparedness and the deep talks, and the acceptance". She believed her experience with the dying and death of her grandmother had most influenced her ability to find meaning in the death of "J.H.". She described an experience after the loss of her grandmother which immensely affected her perception of death. After her grandmother's death Diane won in a lottery two consecutive first prizes, each of which was a bottle of "Joy" perfume. She believed her grandmother had somehow sent this message in an attempt to ease Diane's pain by describing the joy she had found in death. Several years after her grandmother's death she was able to bring this meaning to the loss of her friend "J.H.". Despite her anguish she felt certain that in death "J.H." had found joy. He had been freed from his painful struggle with life and had gone on in peace to a better place.

J.H.'s illness had been long-term, and in watching him deteriorate she had accepted that it was terminal. She had experienced intense and continual anguish in the months before his death, and stated she had done "most of the work of grief" before his death. Although a year after his death she believed she had come to terms with much of his loss, she found that certain symbolic reminders, such as passing by the bench dedicated to his memory, triggered her sadness. She conceded that although she was still mourning, the triggered sadness
was not indicative of a lack of acceptance of J.H's loss, but rather of the depth of her feelings for him.

In considering all of her experiences of loss, she resolved that "grief is about mourning our own mortality as much as mourning the loss of the other person". She believed that her losses, especially those that were sudden, had taught her to make the most of each moment with others. And in witnessing such courage in her friends, she acknowledged she was herself inspired towards greater courage, wisdom and purpose in her own life and work.

General Structure

The Meaning of Grief for all Co-researchers

Despite the diversity of their experience of loss, there appeared to be an invariant thread which ran through each co-researcher's story of grieving the death of her close friend. This thread was constructed of 10 themes common to all the experiences. Though each survivor's story contained some themes not found in the other experiences of loss, the meaning of grief for all co-researchers seemed to embody the following themes or elements: Emotional Distress, Exclusion, Inclusion, Concession, Control, Dissonance, Integrity, Meaning, Ritual, and Acceptance.

These elements did not appear to be experienced in a linear pattern within the experiences. As the stories of loss were told by the co-researchers, it would appear that some elements were experienced simultaneously and at several points throughout the experience of loss. For the sake of the following presentation, however, the elements will be presented in a linear manner with the caveat that no one element appeared to supercede another in terms of influence in the co-researchers' experience of grief. The first element, or theme, to be presented is that of Emotional distress.

Emotional distress.
With the death of her friend, the co-researcher described a sense of emotional distress which may have included such facets as anguish, confusion, disbelief, longing, and a sense of being overwhelmed. These feelings appeared to be experienced to varying degrees regardless of her preparation for the death of her friend. This reaction seemed to be intensified when the death was sudden or multiple stressors existed.

Throughout her bereavement these feelings tended to be triggered by various factors for the co-researcher, including symbolic reminders of the deceased, or the acknowledgement by others of the legitimacy of her loss. Other triggers were also reported such as dreams and moments of quiet or solitude.

In response to the loss of her friend "N", Anna experienced the anguish, sadness and sense of meaninglessness which she believed were typical aspects of bereavement. She stated that when "N" died,

the experience was so intensely painful and so typical of what people think of that enormous sense of sadness and wanting to cry and not wanting it to happen...all I wanted to do was to know how to get through the days....A couple of people at work knew "N", and that we had a very close relationship and I just didn't want them to say anything ....I [didn't] want to cry...and I was afraid something would trigger...

Similarly, with the loss of her friend "S", Carla experienced an intense sense of anguish which was often and unexpectedly triggered. She stated,

She'd been doing really good so it was a real shock....my sadness and pain came up at funny times, during dreams and while driving or doing other tasks....I think of her at different times and it's now just sad. It's not an ache or a shock anymore, I just miss her.

With the deaths of her close friends, Diane also experienced a sense of anguish and longing, and at times felt overwhelmed by her
loss. She described an intensified sense of these especially during the illness and after the death of her friend "J.H", and stated

With "J.H." in particular the loss was so apparent and so long term, you know [I was] continually grieving...I was always conscious about not crying in front of him and so I'd see him and then drive home in my car bawling my eyes out. That was an ongoing part of it. So when he actually died there was a lot of that work that had already been done...A couple months ago I walked by the apartment that he used to live in and I started crying...it's not a lack of acceptance. It's more just how deeply you feel about it and how close the relationship got through the process of loss.

After the loss of her life-long friend "L", Natasha described a sense of shock followed by an overwhelming sense of sadness and anger, stating

The cancer was in her bones by the time I had found out about it, and so a lot obviously of that meeting I was in shock....I felt sad, and shocked and angry....And it was February before she actually died but it was like when I first found out - it was kind of like I was numb. I heard the news but I guess part of it was relief mixed with sadness.

Exclusion.

The co-researchers also described a sense of exclusion in their experience of loss. Such exclusion was experienced in several forms, including physical exclusion wherein the bereaved friend was impeded in being physically present with the dying friend or during the friend's funeral. Similarly exclusion was experienced when the bereaved friend was impeded, or impeded herself, in openly discussing aspects of the impending or actual loss. Some co-researchers experienced exclusion in terms of their own bereavement status itself, wherein others or they themselves denied the legitimacy of their loss thereby limiting their access to support.

For Anna, after her close friend "N" became ill, she experienced both emotional and physical separation from him. Believing he did not
want to talk about his illness, she felt impeded in openly exploring and resolving with N. the meaning and implications of his loss. When his illness progressed, he moved to his home town to die. She felt effectively excluded from his dying process, which may have influenced her continued difficulty in accepting his loss. She stated,

"N", who was so close to me, kept the knowledge of his illness and the fact that he was going to die from me until it was completely obvious....my grief in his death was that we really didn't talk about it...and so that I think heightened the more typical sadness....If he had an idea of how he wanted things to happen, he certainly never said to anyone. He went home [to another city] to die.

Carla also experienced a sense of exclusion in her bereavement experience. Her sense of exclusion was generated primarily by her uncertainty regarding the legitimacy of her bereavement status. She not only believed that others were generally unaware of the meaning and extent of her loss, but at times also questioned whether she herself had really suffered a legitimate loss. Such uncertainty seems to have led to her self-imposed exclusion from bereavement status, inhibiting her ability to openly grieve and seek support. She stated,

I didn't really feel there was anyone who understood where I was at, so I just sort of kept it all to myself. I really didn't think I had permission to talk about my grief....Nobody knows what you're missing because they don't know what level of friendship you had....it was lonely, but then I kept thinking "Oh well, get on with it, just get on with it. She was just a friend."

With the deaths of 3 of her friends, Diane also described a varying experience of exclusion in the loss of each. She describes here her experience of exclusion with the loss of her friend "D". After D's unexpected death, Diane experienced an intense sense of exclusion from his dying process. His sudden death effectively prevented her from exploring and resolving with him the meaning that his life had held for her. Diane believed such exclusion created
great difficulty for her in resolving his loss and stated,

His death was so sudden....I didn't get the spiritual feedback that was important with the other people that died, that would have helped me to accept it....I didn't get a sense back that there was meaning in it.

Natasha also described a sense of exclusion with the deaths of her 2 friends. Her first experience of the loss of her best friend in childhood was characterized predominantly by the experience of exclusion from bereavement status. It was an experience which she believed greatly affected the way in she grieved later losses. She stated,

Nobody seemed to understand the significance of J's death to me, and I was not allowed to go to the funeral. I felt really left out....The fact that I was denied access - denied value - in wanting to grieve her death formally I think has also been another pattern in my life....I do have this pattern of not being able to really process my feelings and to grieve....I don't even remember crying at my father's funeral.

Inclusion.

At other times in their experience of loss, the co-researchers described feeling a sense of inclusion. Such inclusion was experienced when open discussion of the loss and its implications was encouraged by the dying friend, or by others who recognized the legitimacy of the loss. Inclusion was also experienced through such acts as care-taking for the dying friend, or carrying out his or her specific wishes. The co-researcher's sense of inclusion was further enhanced when the legitimacy of her loss and of her status as bereaved was recognized by the bereaved herself or by others who were aware of her loss.

Anna described a sense of inclusion in J's experience of illness and dying through to his death, explaining,

"J" and I talked about him being ill, we talked very openly about how he felt....and what [dying of AIDS] meant to him...we talked
about the regret that we would not get old together...."J" would force me, would almost say "you tell me what it is you really think"....To the very end I was a part of his experience.

While her friend "S" was ill Carla also experienced a sense of inclusion in S's care, offering support and hope for her recovery. In the initial months after S's death, Carla struggled with her own position as legitimately bereaved. But eventually after acknowledging the validity of her loss, she again experienced a sense of inclusion as she began to openly acknowledge and explore the meaning of her loss, while encouraging other mutually bereaved friends to do the same. She stated, 

After agreeing to do this interview, I let myself explore my feelings....I realized that if there was a study being done on this, that maybe I wasn't the only friend who was grieving the loss of a friend. It was like discovering I was allowed to feel this way...I've realized it is acceptable to grieve like this for a friend....I wrote [a mutual friend also grieving the loss of "S"] to let her know that she could call me to talk and that it's okay to grieve "S", to reach out....

Diane also had a sense of inclusion in her experience of bereavement with both "J" and "J.H." Especially with her friend "J.H.", open discussion of his impending death was ongoing, and she was intensely involved in his care to the very end of his dying process. She described her sense of inclusion, stating 

We were close [and] we got closer after he got AIDS....there were a group of us who were a support group who sat with him and did a round the clock watch....the experience of that was the connection we [J.H. and I] had....it meant that I could talk to him about how I felt about him going, and that I could tell him that I loved him and that he could tell me he loved me.

Natasha also described a sense of inclusion in her experience of the death of her friend "L". Though she believed her ability to openly discuss the loss with L's family was discouraged, she gained a
sense of inclusion with her own support group where she found the freedom to fully express what the loss of "L" had meant for her. She stated that it was "only there that I was able to feel and go to the depths of despair...and to acknowledge that...and then let it go". Her final and only visit with "L" before she died also allowed Natasha a sense of inclusion. She felt she had been given an opportunity to participate in and ease L's dying process, and stated:

One of my best memories was I got that peppermint foot cream and I massaged her feet - it probably symbolized an awful lot but it felt good to be able to do something that I thought no matter what stage she was at in her consciousness, she could probably feel and appreciate that.

Concession.

Each co-researcher also found herself making concessions for her dying friend. In order to support the needs of the ill friend in his or her dying process, the bereaved friend allowed in her relationship with the dying friend what she normally would not otherwise condone in her friendships.

Anna made concessions for her dying friend "N" which required that she constrain open and genuine expression about his impending loss in order to allow him autonomy in how he wished to cope with his fate. Such concessions may have contributed to her continued difficulty in resolving his death. In describing her concessions, she stated:

Rightly or wrongly I sensed it was something he particularly did not want to share....[yet] friendship means for me a certain intensity, a belief that you don't have to hide things....I feel like I missed something....Why didn't I do what I genuinely wanted? - so it's regret.....should I have said "Now don't lie to me. You tell me how you feel". But I couldn't because I wanted to be his version of the perfect friend...my guess was that he didn't want to say anything.

Carla too made concessions for her friend "S". She maintained her support for "S" in spite of the latter's ability to be a contributing
partner in their friendship. Carla explained,

I spent a lot of time with "S" during her rough times....Because "S" had decompensated for so many years we'd lost that closeness...it was so draining, like I was trying to put so much energy into her to try and get her out of this depression and she wasn't giving anything back to me...I psyched myself up quite a bit to go out and see her but I'm glad I did.

Diane also made concessions during her experience of loss especially for her friend "J.H.". She consciously impeded herself from fully enjoying her own life during J.H.'s long struggle with illness and death. Though she did not regret her concessions she believed she paid a toll for her intense support and explained,

I wasn't really letting myself enjoy myself to the max, because I felt I couldn't really have so much fun if my friend is dying and suffering. I couldn't really go on and live.

Natasha also made a concession for her friend "L". She recognized that the superficiality of their last contact actually characterized much of her relationship with "L", "I mean we did have some conversations, but it was always very superficial...and so that realization went into that contact I had with her in those days when she was dying". Despite the lack of depth in their relationship however, her loyalty remained constant to her dying friend over the months before L's death. She stated she fully recognized, in spite of the superficiality, "what L had meant to me over the years, and how we had managed to sustain the friendship in spite of the distance and our different avenues in life".

Control.

During her experience of loss, the co-researcher often needed to address her own sense of powerlessness in being able to control or somehow influence the course of events leading up to and surrounding
the loss. At times she questioned whether she had done enough or whether enough had been done for her dying friend. When confronted with her actual ability to predict or influence the outcome, several co-researchers oscillated between a sense of powerlessness and that of satisfaction in their ability to have done so. For most co-researchers the death challenged them not only to cope with the loss of the friend but also with their own vulnerability in terms of mortality itself; the death of her friend often challenged the co-researcher to address the reality of her own inevitable death.

Anna found herself struggling with the degree of control or influence she had had in the course of both the illnesses and deaths of "N" and "J", and stated

*What grief as well means for me is a sense of responsibility; a childish sense that I had enough control to fix it...that I could have changed things...I even have this irrational thought that I should have been more supportive and said "well you don't have to die, you can be the one person [who beats this disease]"...I suppose I didn't say that because I didn't think that....but everyone once in a while I'll think "what else could I have done?"*

Carla also struggled with the degree of responsibility she had in influencing S's fate, and found herself asking why she "wasn't able to stop "S" from hanging herself". After considering the number of people, including herself, who had tried to intervene she resolved that she and others had done everything they could to prevent S's suicide. She explained,

*There was nothing I could do, or anybody else. If all these strong and caring people couldn't help her through it, then maybe it just wasn't meant to be....it was her choice.*

Diane's experience of the loss of her friends "J" and then "D" was also characterized by a struggle with her sense of control. Though
she was resolved to J's impending death, she found herself confronted by the fact that he may have ended his life early through suicide. She was unprepared for the suddenness of his loss, and also found herself overwhelmed by the fact that at the same time the health of both her father and grandmother was seriously failing. She stated "people's mortality was really in my face at the time, in a big way. I think I really had to do some sorting out". She was again confronted by a sense of powerlessness when she found herself unable to make sense of the sudden loss of another friend, "D". She began to recognize that resolving his loss meant acknowledging her own vulnerability. She stated,

The other part [about grief] is coming to terms with my own mortality. What I've gotten from all of these experiences is the living to the moment...people can leave really suddenly, so no matter what age they are we need to cherish the time we have.

Natasha also struggled with her sense of powerlessness in finding out too late that her friend had been discouraged from seeking treatment at a centre where Natasha was aware that promising possibilities existed for treatment. She questioned whether more could have been done to have saved her friend's life and stated "it's kindof that situation where you think that something could have happened and the circumstances didn't transpire...that was really difficult for me."

Dissonance.

The co-researcher experienced a sense of dissonance when her beliefs about the deceased or about grief reactions were in conflict with her own overt behaviors or the overt behaviors of others. This sense of discord was experienced as anger, frustration or revulsion in response to other persons whose reactions were difficult for the bereaved friend to accept. Such discord may have also occurred in
terms of her own response to the loss which was at times experienced as dissonant with or contrary to the way she believed she would or should have coped with such a loss; this dissonance was often experienced by the bereaved as frustration or reproach with herself.

Anna experienced a sense of discord especially after the death of her friend "N". She experienced an intensity of anguish after his death which felt completely foreign and disdainful to her. To avoid becoming emotionally overwhelmed and crying in front of others, Anna isolated herself and explained to a concerned friend, "it's not part of my character to be a blubbering kind of idiot".

Dissonance was also a part of Carla's experience of loss. Constraining herself from speaking to others about the loss of "S" was experienced as dissonant for Carla, who perceived herself to be otherwise instrumental in forthrightly discussing and resolving issues. She explained, "It was really a burden keeping it [S's loss] to myself...everything else in my life I always deal with - I'm quite an assertive person". She also experienced a sense of dissonance with others, including "S", in their response to S's death, stating

I was angry at the gossip in the town after she died. And I was angry about how she chose to do it [suicide by hanging] - I was very angry about that. How could people be so unkind?

Diane experienced a sense of dissonance with the loss of several of her friends. She described an intense sense of discord especially with the death of her friend "J". She had been inspired by J's courage and determination in the face of his chronic and terminal illnesses, and in light of this stoicism she had difficulty resolving that he may have taken his own life, and stated

I think I've always questioned that too if he did take his life...that part is still hard for me to come to terms with...maybe because it was incongruent with the stoic nature of
his character.... there was also some battling going on in his family about his assets, so there's that kind of negative side... I remember coming back from the funeral service, I felt a lot of anger.

Natasha also experienced a sense of dissonance, and discussed how she experienced this with the death of her friend "L". In light of her need to openly acknowledge the impending loss of her friend and what that meant to her, she experienced great frustration with others, stating, "I went back home to visit her [but] at the point where I saw her she had really succumbed to death. I found it incredibly frustrating, and on top of that everybody seemed to be denying that she was actually dying".

**Integrity.**

In her experience of loss, each co-researcher seemed to become aware of the effect that impending death had on her friend's integrity, or adherence to a code of values. The co-researcher noted with pride the way in which her friend's integrity remained intact despite the adversity of illness. Or conversely, she recalled with sadness how such integrity had been threatened or diminished by the illness. Several co-researchers were also aware of the effect of the impending or actual death on their own sense of integrity and their ability to live with conviction and meaning.

Some co-researchers described a specific image of their deceased friend which symbolized that friend's serenity or vitality in the face of death. This image seemed to restore or uphold their friend's integrity, and appeared to assist the bereaved in managing her anguish.

Anna related that although both her friends had died of AIDS, the illness had very different effects on their integrity. She stated that "J" had "acknowledged how he felt about that, but he never denied who he was...he didn't feel like it was a punishment...I felt so proud
of him, so incredibly proud of him". Whereas with "N" she explained he "really did believe that in some way he deserved to die, that it was a punishment".

Carla was also aware of the effect of illness on S's integrity. She was saddened in watching her friend become diminished and destabilized by her disease, stating "S" had

the looks, the brains, the talent. So when you knew the potential, to slowly watch it crumble away was so painful...and knowing how smart she was I was saddened that that was the way that she finally succeeded in killing herself.

Amidst their illnesses, Diane also recognized the courage and integrity possessed especially by her friends "J", and "J.H." Discussing her sense of this as it related to "J", she stated "the impact of his life on me was the courage...when you see someone who is so resilient, suffering with more than almost anybody can deal with, I mean how could we not make a courageous effort about our own lives". And though her losses were extremely painful, her own integrity remained intact throughout their dying processes. She recounted,

I'm really proud of myself for being able to be there...it's really about being aware of what you can give and what you can't, and what your limits are, and try to be true to yourself and the other person in that way.

Natasha was also aware of the effect of illness on the integrity of her dying friend. She reflected on the number of years "L" had suffered with her recurring illness, and stated "I thought she had just really fought a brave battle over a very long period of time...[the cancer] had reoccurred and then reoccurred a third time, and that was her final battle."
It is important here to differentiate between the two levels of meaning observed in the experience of grief. The first level of meaning is that which is addressed in all the elements of the co-researchers' experience of loss. The elements are in fact the extracted or explicit meanings which the bereaved implicitly bestowed on her experience of grief. Through the phenomenological level of observation, the meanings implicit in the lived experience of grief are made explicit, allowing the essential elements of the phenomenon to be illuminated.

The second level of meaning observed is in the form of an element of grief itself. Meaning as an element is the co-researchers' active process of consciously striving to attribute cause or reason to the loss. The element of Meaning was also experienced by the bereaved as an active process of finding concrete ways to grieve the loss in a way which most honored what the deceased had meant to the bereaved. The second level of meaning experienced as an element in itself will be discussed as follows.

Though Anna had no unanswered questions about J's death, which occurred some time after N's, she found herself still searching for a means of making sense of the earlier loss of N. She stated "there wasn't even a logical explanation as to why he got ill." She hoped for someone to provide an explanation for her that would quell her pain yet resolved, "there's nothing that's going to sort this out for me that will make sense. Because death doesn't make sense."

Carla also struggled to make sense of the death of her friend "S", and the means by which "S" had attained that end. She was able to make sense of her friend's act after resolving that for "S", death was the only option which offered peace and an end to her struggle. She explained "I guess that's how desperate she was...her dad said she looked very peaceful when he found her, so I guess that's what she
wanted". This search for meaning was compelling, and seemed to be driven at times at an unconscious level. Carla described having had a dream several months after the loss which helped her to make sense of aspects of S's death which had remained unresolved, such as the degree of responsibility Carla herself had in preventing it. She stated "it's weird how strong your subconscious is, and it's important to deal with things, you can't just keep brushing them away ... obviously somewhere inside of me there was some pretty strong feelings."

For Diane, especially in her first experience with the loss of a close friend, there ensued a struggle to make sense of A's death. She stated,

I really wasn't in touch with the fact that people would actually die...it was a very sad part of my life but not something I was mature enough or emotionally able to deal with other than in just being overwhelmed. She was unable to make sense of her experience until after the death of her own mother, 1 year later, with whom she spent time exploring the meaning of the impending loss. She stated "I think this turned it around for me...since then I've always sensed the really spiritual part and looked for the spiritual part of death." Her most recent loss of her friend "J.H." was one with which despite her anguish she struggled less to find meaning in the death. She had spent a great deal of time during his illness administering to his needs and exploring with him the meaning of his loss. After witnessing his long and agonizing struggle with illness, Diane found meaning in J.H.'s loss, stating that for him "there [was] joy with death."

In her attempt to cope with her losses, Natasha searched not only for a means of making sense of those losses, but also for a way to grieve the death of her friends that would honour the unique meaning their lives had embodied. She explained,
I'm trying to find a way for me to grieve...I've created writings or poetry or sayings or whatever seems to be appropriate and meaningful...the meaning of the person that has been important to you lives within you and in a lot of ways you honour them by carrying that and channelling what was special about them in your own life.

Ritual.

Ritual is here defined as a commemorative act which symbolically and/or metaphorically condenses into a dramatic moment one or more essential aspects of the relationship shared with the deceased. As described by Imber-Black (1988) rituals "make potentially disruptive life-cycle transitions more manageable and less threatening by enclosing them in a web of prescribed activities ...they provide a safe context for the expression of intense emotion" (p. 60). This definition appears to fit the experience of the bereaved in the present study. In an attempt to adapt to the loss of her friend, each co-researcher engaged in a private or public ceremony or act which both commemorated the life of her friend, and legitimized her loss. She described the ritual effective in facilitating her adjustment to the loss if it symbolized the value of the deceased or her relationship with the deceased. Further, the ritual was helpful if it fit the expectations of the bereaved friend, and took place in the company of supportive others when the ritual was of a shared nature.

For Anna, who was asked to read her choice of 2 poems at J's funeral, the reading of a personally selected poem was a ritual that helped her symbolically honour the meaning of J's life. She recounted "The one I wanted to read is The Road Not Taken, but I didn't know if I could get through it...I thought to respect my friend I'm going to get through this, I'm not going to cry, I'm just going to read this." Further, she found ritual helpful when it met her expectations of what a commemorative ceremony should be. Describing the disposition of J's
ashes, a ceremony which took place with a few close friends, she stated "it was the way things are supposed to be." Conversely, she found disturbing a ceremony planned for her friend N. which she believed neither representative of his wishes nor fitting in terms of her own needs, and recalled thinking to herself "what am I going to do now. I can't bear to look at these pictures...this is unreal...I don't think N. would have wanted any of it."

Carla also found unsettling the experience of ritual that did not reflect her expectations or the value of the deceased. She found the formal ritual of S's funeral disturbing as it failed to eulogize and thus represent the positive effects “S” had had on the lives of Carla and others. She explained that she believed at a funeral,

they should talk about the person and their life, and how they touched people, and [the church] just didn't do that...so whereas at some funerals you experience closure because you can sit and think about their life, hers was just long and so bizarre.

In contrast the evening spent with bereaved friends after the funeral was a more fitting ritual for Carla who felt her friend's life had there been honoured through personal remembrances the group had shared about S. She recounts "that day with those old friends was really important...that to me was more of the funeral because we reminisced about S." Carla also created private rituals to honour the life of her friend stating, "I chose not to wear black to the funeral...our lives together were colors, so I wore a very colorful dress...I thought I'll be mourning on the outside but inside colors is what she is."

In her attempt to adapt to her losses, Diane also found important the creation of personally meaningful rituals. Encouraged by her ailing friend “J.H.” to do something positive with the energy from her pain and create a "fitting, living, contributing memorial" for her
deceased friend "D", she helped to establish a memorial fund which would assist in the administration of an annual workshop offered in D's area of speciality. She stated "the memorial was really how I directed some of my energy. It was a way to honour him." She found such public commemoration helpful also in adjusting to the death of several other important people, including the later death of her friend "J.H." She stated

what's helped me in the grieving has been to do that kind of memorial thing that "J.H." talked about...and with "J.H." we went out and scattered his ashes near lighthouse park and that was really beautiful...those things are really important in the acknowledgement [of the loss].

Natasha also believed the creation of a meaningful ritual enabled her to honour the meaning of her deceased friends. After being denied access to the funeral of her childhood friend "J", she described the rituals she created, stating

I remember standing out on the fence of the schoolyard watching [J's] funeral...somehow it seemed very significant that I had at least seen it...I remember a bird dying and I buried it and put a cross on the grave. Whether that was a way of channelling J's death I'm not sure...[And later as an adult] I took a picture of J's tombstone and that seemed to have been something really important to do.

In describing the importance of rituals in her experience of bereavement, Natasha explained further, "I'm a very spiritual person and I need to create rituals that honour the value and the life that is sacred and has meaning to me. And through doing that I'm able to let it go."

Acceptance.

The final element to be discussed in the co-researcher's experience of loss is that of Acceptance. The co-researcher indicated that in adapting to her loss, she eventually began to experience
acceptance of that loss as a result of an active process that took place over an extended period of time. Acceptance, for each co-researcher, seemed to be facilitated by a belief which gained clarity over time that her friend had found a sense of peace or joy in death. Acceptance of her friend's death seemed to be accompanied by a sense of resolution that the bereaved herself was at peace with the loss.

Anna described a sense of acceptance in J's loss. She found herself resigned to the inevitability of his death, which helped her prepare for and begin to accept his loss. She had supported him through his lengthy experience of illness and dying, and began to accept his impending death as a positive alternative to the anguish and pain he experienced with his decline. Believing "J" anticipated and found peace in impending death, she explained,

I had watched him become a person that he didn't want to be...I didn't want him to live that way anymore, and I knew that he didn't want to live...There were no other options. And he was relatively ok with [dying], as ok as anybody could be...The best thing about J's death is he made it awfully easy for his friends...I have a quite peaceful feeling about that death...It is something that is sad but not something you have to keep trying to sort out...oddly enough it feels like he died a long time ago, although it's just a year.

In contrast, though N's death had occurred almost 2 years before J's, Anna found she had not yet accepted N's loss, stating

Not that I had a closer friendship with "N" than I had with "J"...[but] the other thing it goes back to is if you believe people get what they want when they die, that helps. In a sense "J" got what he wanted, and then there's the other sense that "N" didn't get what he wanted. And so there's that element missing. So there's that regret...I don't know that I'll ever feel it's okay that "N" died...it frightens me to say that there wouldn't be acceptance.

Carla's anguish over her friend's struggle with illness also brought her to a point where she began to resign to S's fate well
before the actual death. Recalling a conversation with a mutual friend of S's before the suicide she stated, "we both acknowledged that one day we were going to get the call that she had taken her life...we were just sortof preparing ourselves...she was so tormented those last couple of years." Two years after S's death, through a process of allowing herself to acknowledge the extent of her loss and experience the concomitant anguish, Carla believed she had finally accepted S's death, explaining

That's what she wanted and in the end it was her choice...She is at peace finally after struggling so long...I'm just happy that she's not struggling like she was, and now I'm able to just enjoy the good memories...I've had so much time to think about it and I've let myself think about it. Now I can talk about it without really getting emotional because I'm at peace with it now.

For Diane, participating in her mother and grandmother's experiences of illness and death helped facilitate her acceptance of the deaths of her friends, especially "A", "J", and "J.H.". In the deaths of her family members, she witnessed what she described as an awe inspiring sense of spirituality, wherein death for the deceased was accompanied by a sense of peace or joy. She sensed this mystery especially in the death of her friend "J.H.", in whose dying process she was most intensely involved, and with whose death she was most immediately resolved. She stated

His loss was so long term, we were grieving continually...so when he actually died, there was a lot of that work that had already been done...what I got from death is...someone whose body is deteriorating and who is really ill, really welcomes death...there is peace in it...there is joy with death...and he was going to a really nice place...All that stuff has helped me with the acceptance.

With the unexpected death of her friend "D" however she stated "the suddenness of it...I didn't have the ability to process it like I
did with the others." Her acceptance of his loss was facilitated by another dying friend who suggested to her that "D" had had a full life, and that his sudden and unexpected death "allowed him to live until the end. That is a positive, that he did not become incapacitated...or have to cope with the knowledge of impending death."

And for Natasha, in the months before the death of her friend L., she had also resigned herself to the inevitability of her loss. When the news of L's death arrived Natasha experienced sadness, but also relief in that death was a positive alternative to the months and years of suffering that L. had endured. To experience acceptance in L's loss, she believed she needed to bring some final closure to the process of grieving that loss, but stated

I've grieved for her in a lot of the ways that I've needed to [but] I may need to bring some final closure to it and acknowledge that...with friends, I don't know what really letting them go is like. I only know the way that I've done it.
CHAPTER V
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to define the essential elements of the lived experience of grief for surviving friends. In examining the experience of loss as described by each of the four co-researchers interviewed in this study, there appeared to be a common thread of shared meaning or experience that embodied 10 essential elements. Although an element may have been manifested in different forms across each of the experiences of loss, its essential meaning remained the same. For the bereaved friends in this study, the experience of grief was constructed of the following elements, including that of Acceptance, Concession, Control, Dissonance, Emotional Distress, Exclusion, Inclusion, Integrity, Meaning, and Ritual.

Results in Relation to Current Literature

Lindemann (1944) characterized grief as a reaction to crisis involving a set of six characteristic biopsychosocial symptoms or elements. The co-researchers in the present study appear to have experienced several of these elements in their bereavement, although not all of the following responses as outlined by Lindemann were consistently experienced. The first of Lindemann's symptomatic elements was described as feeling-related phenomena such as sadness, anger, guilt and self-reproach. These phenomena appeared to be variably experienced by the bereaved in this study. All co-researchers experienced sadness in their loss, an element which was thematically defined in the present study as "Emotional Distress." Anger also seemed to be an aspect of experience for the bereaved in this study, and was defined here as the element or theme of "Dissonance", wherein the co-researcher experienced a sense of discord either with others or with her own reaction to the loss. Co-researchers also appeared to experience guilt or self-reproach,
although they described their experience more as a struggle with issues of control and powerlessness rather than that of guilt.

Disbelief in the reality of the death, another distinct element of the grief reaction described in Lindemann's study, was also illustrated in the present study especially in Diane's experience of loss. Her first experience with death was with the loss of her friend "A", and for some time after his loss she denied the reality of the fact that he would never return. At this point in her life she was unfamiliar with death and had not yet acknowledged the reality of its existence.

Hostile reactions, also a symptom described by Lindemann as characteristic of the grief response, was variably experienced by three of the co-researchers in the study. Anna, Diane and Carla each described what may be defined as hostile reactions during their experiences of bereavement. These hostile reactions are defined as the experience of "Dissonance" in the present study. Anna experienced dissonance when confronted by another bereaved who openly invalidated Anna's feelings of anger with the loss of her friend "N". Diane also experienced dissonance amidst the pain of her loss of "D" and found herself enraged by another mourner whose exploitative actions impinged on the abilities of Diane and other bereaved to openly and fully experience their grief. Carla similarly experienced dissonance when confronted by the gossip of non-bereaved individuals whose actions appeared to her to be sensationalizing her friend's suicide.

Lindemann also described the loss of patterns of conduct as a characteristic symptom of grief. Such loss was experienced more as a disruption in the present study. With the death of her friend "N", Anna described an initial disruption in her pattern of conduct, and experienced this in her work as well as in her social life. Carla, Diane and Natasha also experienced some form of disruption in their
patterns of conduct after the loss of their respective friends. The final characteristic to be illustrated here regarding Lindemann's symptomology is that of behavioral symptoms, including sleep and appetite disturbances. Co-researchers in the present study also appeared to experience a variety of such disturbances, including vivid and sleep-disrupting dreams, and changes in appetite and energy.

The results of the present study can also be discussed in relation to aspects of the models of grief proposed by Bowlby (1961) and Kubler-Ross (1969). In contrast to their findings regarding the phases (Bowlby, 1961) or stages (Kubler-Ross, 1969) of grief, a linear or sequential aspect in the experience of grief generally did not appear to emerge in this study. Only one co-researcher spoke of her experience of loss as if it occurred in stages. Before the death of her friend, Carla had been familiar with a model outlining the stages of grief, and later found herself comparing her own experience to this model. It is difficult to assess the extent to which her experience was affected by such apriori knowledge. For the other bereaved in this study, the elements of their grief did not seem to be experienced in a linear form. Most elements seemed to overlap and were re-experienced at various times throughout the co-researchers' experience of loss. For example the element of Acceptance may have been experienced by the co-researcher well before the death, yet variably waxed and waned in clarity and definition as the surviving friend mediated other elements of her experience, such as that of Control or Meaning.

The limited emergence in the present study of such aspects of grief as phases or stages may well be explained by the particular methodology chosen. Each co-researcher in this study was asked to describe her experience of loss by commencing her story at a point in her experience which seemed most important or fitting as a place to
begin. The intent of this approach was to allow the co-researcher to focus on aspects of her experience which she herself deemed to be most meaningful and/or problematic, thereby allowing the essence of her experience itself to dictate the emergent structure of grief. Had the co-researcher been instructed instead to describe her experience by beginning at a point in her experience as determined by the researcher, it is possible that a chronological or sequential form may have emerged in terms of her experience of the elements of her grief.

Despite the fact that co-researchers did not describe the presence of stages or phases in their experience, other aspects of the models of grief proposed by Kubler-Ross (1969) and Bowlby (1961) appear to be illuminated in the experiences of grief described in the present study. Disbelief, anger, depressive-like symptoms and acceptance were experienced to varying degrees by most of the bereaved in this study.

Bowlby (1961) also described the disruptive phenomenon of triggers, such as unexpected reminders of the deceased. He suggested that such triggers precipitated a regression towards an earlier phase of bereavement. Several of the bereaved in the present study also described having encountered unexpected phenomena which often triggered intense emotional or behavioral responses. Co-researchers did not seem however to perceive such experiences as regressive but rather as events which helped them further adapt to, and often find greater meaning in, their loss. To illustrate this dynamic, an aspect of Carla's experience will be discussed. Several months after the suicide of her close friend, Carla unexpectedly found herself intervening in the suicide attempt of one of her patients. She spent several days attempting to make sense of this event and the vivid, disturbing dream which had ensued. In light of these events Carla began to recognize that at some level she had been struggling since her friend's suicide with her own potential culpability in it, a
disturbing issue which until the second suicide had remained unacknowledged and unresolved. Witnessing this second suicide attempt had been a trigger which helped her further adapt to her loss and bring greater clarity of meaning to it.

The experience of grief appeared to be an active process for the bereaved friends in this study. This finding seems to be in keeping with Worden's (1982, 1991) assertion that grief is a dynamic process. Worden describes the act of acknowledging and negotiating the pain of grief as a task which leads for the bereaved towards the eventual resolution of loss. The dynamic aspect of this acknowledgement and negotiation of pain was also evident in the experience of grief for the bereaved in this study. In describing her experience of the elements of inclusion in her bereavement, Natasha states it was only when she was "able to feel and go to the depths of despair...and acknowledge that" that she was able to begin to resolve her anguish over her loss. For Natasha as well as the other co-researchers, such acknowledgement of the pain and the implications of the loss was an active process evolving over a period of time which seemed to impact their eventual adaptation to loss. Similarly, other elements appeared to have a dynamic aspect in the co-researchers' experience of grief. For example each co-researcher actively searched for meaning in her loss, and created concessions as well as personal rituals as a means of honouring her friendship, each of which appeared to have either hindered or enhanced her ability to adapt to her loss.

There appears to be considerable agreement in the literature in terms of the importance of the role played by social support in either alleviating or exacerbating the adverse effects of the stress of bereavement. In their research on bereaved kin Worden (1991) and others (Raphael, 1977; Vachon & Stalianos, 1988) observe that it is the goodness of fit between the actual support offered and the quality
of support as it is perceived that appears to be one of the strongest predictors of adaptation to bereavement. In their research on bereaved non-kin, Kauffman (1989) and Pine (1989) also observe the effect of perceived social support on the experience of grief. According to their observations, bereaved non-kin often fail to acknowledge and/or recognize their own grief, and may do so as a means of avoiding the perceived judgement of others who may consider their overt expression of grief as illegitimate. This perception of limited social support appears to contribute to an intense sense of isolation (Pine, 1989) which may prolong adaption to the loss for the bereaved.

Doka (1989) and others (Deck & Polta, 1989) argue that for non-kin, it is the actual social support which plays a primary role in the experience of grief. These writers assert that as a consequence of societal norms which reserve the definition of bereaved for surviving spouses and immediate kin, bereaved non-kin are excluded from receiving support and acknowledgement for their loss. Such attenuated support subsequently exacerbates the stress of bereavement for non-kin.

The findings in this research appear to illustrate each of these assertions regarding perceived and actual social support. While Anna and Diane indicated the level of support received during their bereavement was adequate, the experience of loss for both Carla and Natasha was at times described as that of exclusion from such social support. Both perceived that the support received in their bereavement was inadequate. Carla's experience of exclusion from support appears to have been influenced by her initial perception that she did not have a legitimate right to openly grieve the death of her friend and subsequently receive support. She questioned her role as bereaved, stating "Why should I get to have someone to talk to about my grief, when [the deceased] has parents and two beautiful children
who are grieving her loss?" Carla indicated that such perceptions initially excluded her from accessing the support that was actually available. When she eventually acknowledged the legitimacy of her loss and of her pain, she found the support from others that she initially believed she did not have a right to access.

Conversely for Natasha, her sense of exclusion in her experience of bereavement appeared to be related to the lack of actual social support and acknowledgement for both her loss as well as her role as bereaved. Especially with her first experience of loss, Natasha recalled that she received little or no recognition and support for the loss of her close friend in childhood. Her experience of exclusion from actual social support during this initial loss appears to have largely affected her perception of available support during later losses, including those suffered in adulthood. She states "I question whether there is support out there for anybody who has suffered a loss. Our culture just does not honour the grief process...if it is like that for a family member, it is multitudes that that denies the grief of a friend."

Given the focus of this paper on subjective experience and meaning making, it is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether in fact it is the perception of or the actual social support that has the greater effect on the experience of grief. Nonetheless, it would seem that depending on the unique aspects of the surviving friend's current and historical experiences, both the actual as well as the perceived level of available support are significant factors in either exacerbating or alleviating the stress of bereavement.

Parkes and Weiss (1983) and others (Raphael & Nunn, 1988; Worden, 1982) suggest that another factor affecting adjustment to loss is the quality of the relationship between the bereaved and the deceased. Among other factors a high level of ambiguity in the relationship with
the deceased may complicate adjustment to loss. Such complications may be illustrated in the present study in the grief experiences of Anna and Natasha whose concessions for their dying friends may have adversely affected their adjustment to the loss. The concessions that Anna made for her friend “N” required that she constrain her open and genuine expression about his impending loss, which left her with many unanswered and unresolved questions after his death. Such concessions may have contributed to her continued difficulty in resolving his death. For Natasha, despite her awareness of the lack of depth in her relationship with her dying friend “L”, her loyalty remained constant over the months leading up to L’s inevitable death. She was unable to address her concerns with her friend, and long after L’s death Natasha continued to question whether she and fully grieved and resolved her loss.

There appears to be considerable reference in the literature regarding the importance of ritual in the experience of grief. Worden (1991) maintains that the ritual of the funeral provides the bereaved with an opportunity to openly express their anguish and receive support in their loss. If the bereaved is not present at the funeral, Worden (1991) and Yoder (1986) observe that adjustment to loss may be complicated if no other means is found to validate the meaning of the relationship and the reality of the death. The creation of a personally meaningful ritual has been suggested as a viable means of so doing (Reeves, 1989). Co-researchers in this study also found ritual to be an important factor in their bereavement. In her experience of grief, Natasha was denied access to the funeral of her friend in childhood, and maintained that in being denied such access she was denied an opportunity to express her grief and receive support. She believes that in order to adjust to her loss, she created private rituals at various times in her life to both validate
and commemorate her friend's life and death. Such personal and often private rituals seemed especially important in the co-researchers' adjustment to loss when the public ritual was representative neither of the meaning of the deceased (or of the relationship shared with the deceased) nor of the expectations held by the bereaved friend of what a commemorative ceremony should be. For example, when the formal ritual of the funeral failed to eulogize and thus represent the meaning of her friend's life, Carla created private rituals which would effectively honour the meaning her friend's life had embodied.

The results of this study illustrate only in part the observations of Doka (1989) and others (Deck & Folta, 1989; Pine, 1989; Kauffman, 1989) who assert that the grief of non-related survivors is largely unrecognized and disenfranchised. Certainly aspects of each co-researcher's experience of grief was characterized by a sense of exclusion. However, the co-researchers also experienced an element of inclusion in their experiences of loss, which included a component of social recognition for and acknowledgement of their loss. Even Natasha, who experienced what appeared to be an actual lack of support and recognition for her loss, found support within her own therapy group which allowed her a sense of inclusion in her bereavement experience. It would seem that within the group of co-researchers in this study, though exclusion was an important element in the meaning of grief, disenfranchisement was not as dominant an element as was indicated in the aforementioned literature.

In my review of the literature, I had been quite influenced by the literature related to the phenomenon of disenfranchised grief. I made a conscious attempt not to let this information bias my perception of the protocols as I was reading them. However, I also expected to find evidence of such disenfranchisement and was surprised when I did not find extensive evidence of this phenomenon in the protocols at hand.
Several factors may explain the minimal influence of this phenomenon on the experience of the co-researchers interviewed in the present study. Firstly, since few if any empirical studies, including phenomenological investigations, appear to have focused on the experience of friendship grief, it may be that disenfranchisement is not as common and potent an element of experience as has been suggested.

Conversely, the experience of disenfranchisement may well have been illustrated as an element of grief if a different group of co-researchers had been interviewed. The element of disenfranchisement may have emerged if the co-researchers were of the opposite gender than that of the present informants. The co-researchers in the present study were all female, and according to Stroebe and Stroebe (1989-1990) females report and exhibit grief reactions more openly and more frequently than males; subsequently females report having experienced social support to a greater degree than their male counterparts. Lister (1991) has also observed that despite the intensity of grief experienced by males, grief reactions are not overtly expressed by this gender. Similarly DaSilva and Schork (1984-1985) report that males may be reticent to discuss their attitudes about death. Given that such reported tendencies may minimize access to social support, if males had been interviewed in the present study it is possible that an element of disenfranchisement might have been illuminated.

Further, co-researchers were all employed in some aspect of the mental health field. As a mental health professional I have made the assumption that these co-researchers like myself have had to address some aspect of the phenomenon of grief in their work, and through their work experiences may well have developed to varying degrees a deepened ability to discuss, explore and define their experience of grief as it is lived and perceived. It may also be assumed that these
bereaved could potentially have had greater access to sources of social support than those bereaved whose vocations are not related to some aspect of mental health. Had the informants been employed in other vocations, or unemployed, an element of disenfranchisement may well have been illuminated.

The results of this study appear to illustrate Krefting's argument (1991) regarding the ability of the phenomenological approach to clarify both the invariant themes and unique meanings of lived experience. In the present study, 10 invariant themes appeared to weave through the lived experience of grief for each bereaved friend. Such invariant or universal aspects of grief also appear to be illuminated when comparing the elements found in this study to that in Douglas' phenomenological study (1994). In the latter study, an essential element in the experience of grief was found to be the development in each of the bereaved participants of a deeper sense of spirituality and understanding of life and death. This spirituality and deeper understanding also appear to be aspects of the experience of grief for the co-researchers in the present study. For the co-researchers this deeper sense of spirituality appeared to be an aspect of their experience of the element of acceptance, wherein each of the surviving friends developed a conviction which gained clarity over time that her friend had found a sense of peace or joy in death. A greater understanding of life and death seemed to be an aspect of their experience of the element of meaning, where the struggle to make sense of the loss often resulted in a greater depth of meaning in the co-researcher's own life and inevitable death.

In relation to the elements found in Carter's phenomenological study of grief (1989), such themes were also observed in the present study. Carter observed the theme of "Seeking", which was characterized by a search for meaning in the loss. The search for
meaning in loss was also an element of the experience of grief for the co-researchers in the present study. Carter also observed such themes as "Hurting", characterized by intensely painful emotions, and "Missing", characterized by an acute awareness of the magnitude of the loss. In the present study, such elements of grief were also experienced by each co-researcher, and were defined as the theme or element of "Emotional Distress".

The rich variation in lived experience amongst the bereaved is also illuminated through the use of the phenomenological approach. This variation is illuminated both within the present study, and in comparing this study to the other phenomenological studies reviewed in this paper. The rich variation in experience will be discussed firstly as it relates to the findings within the present study. A theme which permeated Anna's experience of the loss of her friend "N" was that of being unresolved. Despite the fact that she had suffered and then resolved another loss of a very close friend since N's death, she still could not make sense of N's death and believed it would remain unresolved and unaccepted. None of the other co-researchers experienced a loss which had remained yet unresolved at the time of the interview despite the similarity in time elapsed since their losses had occurred. Similarly, the element of intuition was an aspect of experience for several but not all co-researchers. In reference to the loss of a particular close friend, Diane, Carla and Anna each described a sense of knowing without external evidence that there had been a change in her friend's status; Natasha did not experience this sense of intuition, nor did Diane and Anna in their experience of loss of other close friends.

In comparing the unique elements of grief found in this study with those found in other phenomenological studies of grief, such elements as that of "Integrity" and "Concession" which were important themes
in the experience of bereaved friends in this study, do not appear to be illuminated in the other phenomenological studies discussed in this paper.

Given the existence of multiple realities, the phenomenological method appears to be a highly effective means towards defining and illuminating both the essence of the phenomenon of grief, as well as the unique aspects of its lived experience for each bereaved. This writer agrees with Brice (1991) in his assertions that "the findings of any study are limited by those profiles that show themselves" (p.35). Subsequently if no single investigator is able to realistically capture the entire essence of the phenomenon of grief it appears that further phenomenological research is required to more fully conceptualize the essence and potential typologies of grief. Further areas of inquiry are suggested in the following section.

Limitations of the Present Study and Implications for Future Research

The focus of this study was to observe the experience of grief for surviving friends. It was beyond the scope of this study to draw conclusions about the potential differences in the experience of grief which may exist between bereaved friends and bereaved kin. Such distinctions may or may not prove useful. Further phenomenological studies which include participants from both camps would be required to highlight any distinctions.

All co-researchers in the present study were female. It is possible that a different structure of grief would emerge if co-researchers had been male, or if the study included bereaved individuals of both genders. Similarly, all co-researchers had some level of post-secondary education and were employed either directly or indirectly in occupations which focused on the area of mental health.

Future research focusing on the experience of grief for the bereaved in other work and education related occupations may prove useful to
better understand the essence of grief.

All co-researchers in this study were aware of the impending loss prior to the deaths of their friends. Only one co-researcher, who had suffered several expected losses of close friends, experienced one of her losses as sudden and unexpected. A different structure of grief may have emerged if sudden loss was a factor in the experience of grief for all co-researchers in this study. Additional research may prove useful in determining the existence of such a typology of grief.

The structure of the phenomenon of grief may well be dependent on such factors as the context of the death (ie long term terminal illness vs. sudden death), the context of the relationship (ie kin vs. non-kin), or the profile of the bereaved (ie gender). It may be impossible to condense all such situated structures into one configuration or general typological structure of grief without losing essential meaning. It seems that more phenomenological studies both within and between such potentially unique contexts are necessary in order to determine whether various typological structures of grief exist. Further, given that no two investigators using the phenomenological method may choose exactly the same thematic heading to describe an element of lived experience, it would be necessary to cross-reference all such studies to identify invariant but variously labelled themes.

Implications for Practice

Hocker (1990) and Scurfield (1985) suggest that in telling the story of painful loss, the survivor may experience emotional relief as well as gain a greater depth of meaning in his or her loss. The results of the present study seem to support their assertions. For several of the co-researchers in the present study, the interview itself was one of the few opportunities they had had to tell their story in a way that seemed most relevant and meaningful. They
described experiencing relief in the knowledge that they were able to do so without fear of interruption. It seemed that in being encouraged to discuss the aspects of her experience which seemed most personally meaningful, and in simply being listened to, the co-researcher experienced emotional relief and gained a greater depth of meaning in her loss. Three of the four bereaved in the present study reported such effects at our follow-up meeting. In terms of the implications for practitioners, such feedback seems to indicate the therapeutic influence at least in the initial stages of simply listening without attempts at intervention to the client’s experience of loss.

The themes by which the co-researchers structured their experience are also important clinical considerations. By using as a guide such phenomenologically-generated themes as those outlined in the present study, the practitioner can anticipate and explore with the client a broad range of responses in order to support the client in his or her loss. In terms of the element of concession, it may be useful to explore with a bereaved client the allowances which were made for the dying or deceased friend, and the impact such concessions had and continue to have on the client’s adjustment to loss. In the present study, the concessions Carla made for her dying friend appeared to reassure her of the fact that she had remained loyal to the friendship and subsequently had done all she could to save her friend. Such concessions appeared to facilitate her adaptation to her loss. On the other hand, the concessions that Anna made for her friend “N” may have hindered her adjustment to his loss, since these concessions negated her ability to openly discuss with him his impending death. Several years after his death she continues to feel unresolved about his loss, and wonders if this lack of acceptance is the cost of concessions which were made out of loyalty for her friend.
The element of control appears important to address with the bereaved client. For the bereaved in the present study, control was often manifested as a sense of powerlessness, and perhaps guilt, in being unable to either influence or predict the friend's demise. It may prove empowering for the client to assist him or her in exploring areas wherein he or she was able to realistically support the friend. Further to this, several co-researchers in the present study described the influence of loss in forcing them to address their own mortality. Such an existential dilemma may well be a shared experience of grief for many bereaved clients, and may prove beneficial for the client to explore.

It may also be useful to explore the sense of dissonance a bereaved client may be experiencing. If the client's actual response to loss is experienced as contrary to his or her belief in the way a loss should be coped with, such discord may attenuate the client's ability to fully grieve and subsequently resolve the loss.

The survivor's sense both of exclusion and inclusion in the experience of loss appear to be very important factors in either alleviating or exacerbating the stress of bereavement. The element of exclusion was manifested in various forms for the co-researchers in the present study and appeared to increase the survivor's sense of emotional distress and hinder her adjustment to loss. Conversely, the element of inclusion in its various forms appeared to facilitate adjustment.

It may prove useful to examine with the client his or her experience of the element of exclusion. Several factors should be assessed, including the client's own perception of his or her right to legitimately grieve the loss and receive support. The practitioner should also assess with the client the availability and viability of support systems, with the client being encouraged to access those that
For the co-researchers in the present study, the experience of being included in the friend's process of dying appeared to facilitate adjustment to the loss. Such experiences of inclusion should be addressed with the bereaved client. If none exist, or if the death of the friend was sudden, psychodrama exercises could be suggested by the practitioner to encourage the client to re-create the story of death. In re-creating the time frame before the actual death, the client will have the opportunity to explore the meaning and implications of the loss with the deceased friend himself, or with other important individuals in the story, potentially facilitating adaptation to the loss. Such exercises may be contra-indicated if the client is experiencing some degree of psychosis wherein reality testing is compromised.

It may prove beneficial to the client's adjustment to explore his or her awareness of how the dying process and/or death affected the friend's, as well as his or her own, level of integrity. The client should be assisted in developing a realistic and meaningful version of the effect that illness or death had on the integrity of those in question.

For the bereaved in the present study, the search for meaning in the loss was an important element in their experience of grief. Although the ability to find meaning in the loss appeared to facilitate adjustment to the friend's death, there was often an aspect of struggle in the search for such meaning. Accordingly, bereaved clients may also require assistance in their attempt to make sense of the death.

The co-researchers appeared to find the element of ritual effective, under specific conditions, in facilitating their adjustment to loss. It is important to explore with the client the degree to
which formal or private rituals effectively symbolized the meaning of
the deceased or the relationship shared with the deceased, and if
those rituals fit the client's expectations.
If ritual failed to fit the needs of the bereaved, or if he or she did
not participate in such commemorative ceremonies, the practitioner may
at an appropriate time assist the client in creating a personal ritual
to fit those unmet needs.
References


Appendix A

Pre-screening Questions

Name __________________________

Age ___  Sex ___

Was the person who died a friend with whom you were involved in a non-sexual friendship? ______

Would you describe this friend among your closest seven or eight friends? _____

How long ago did your friend die? _____

Are you presently in counselling to help you adjust to the loss of your friend? (If the person responds affirmatively to this, it will be suggested that she discuss the possibility of involvement in the study with her counsellor, such that her participation in the study will not interfere with the work she is doing in therapy).

Do you feel you require counselling to help you facilitate your grieving process? (If the person responds affirmatively, the research purpose of the study will again be explained, and the respondent will be asked if she would like to be provided with references for local grief counsellors and agencies).
Appendix B

Interview Protocol for First Interview

Primary Interview Question

We have talked earlier about the purpose of this study being an attempt to map or define the process of grief experienced by friends surviving the loss through death of a close friend. You have mentioned the death of your close friend and your experience of grieving that loss. I wonder if you would share your story about your loss, beginning if you like with the moment that stands out the most for you.

Interview Protocol for Second Interview

As we discussed earlier, your account of your experience of grieving for your friend has been transformed into a thematic structure. It is hoped that the themes capture the straightforward as well as the underlying (explicit and implicit) meanings that compose experience of grief. Would you please read over this structure to insure that it represents your experience of grieving for your friend. Please take as much time as you need; your candid feedback will be very important in helping us to accurately describe what the experience of friendship grief is like.
Appendix C

Definitions of Unique and Common Themes

The following themes were found in the experiences of loss. While 14 themes are identified below; only 10 themes were illuminated in the general structure because they were found in all four protocols.

1. **Acceptance.** The co-researcher indicated that accepting the loss of her friend was an active process. In the situations where illness preceded death, acceptance seemed to be facilitated by a belief which gained clarity over time that her friend had found a sense of peace or joy in death.

   There was only one situation where a co-researcher experienced the loss of a friend through sudden death. Her acceptance of this loss was facilitated by her resolution that in being unaware of his own impending death her friend was enabled to live his life fully and without suffering.

   For all co-researchers, acceptance of her friend's death seemed to be accompanied by a sense of resolution that she herself was at peace with the loss.

2. **Concession.** As a result of her bond, the co-researcher found herself making concessions for her dying friend. In order to support the needs of the ill friend in his or her dying process, the bereaved friend allowed in her relationship with the dying friend what she normally would not otherwise condone in her friendships.

3. **Control.** During her experience of loss the co-researcher often needed to address her own sense of powerlessness in being unable to control or somehow influence the course of events leading up to and surrounding the loss. At times she questioned whether she had done enough or whether enough had been done for her friend. When confronted with her actual ability to predict and/or influence the outcome, several co-researchers oscillated between a sense of powerlessness and that of satisfaction in their ability to have done so. For most co-researchers, the death challenged them not only to cope with the loss of the friend but also with their own vulnerability in terms of mortality itself; the death of her friend often challenged her to address the reality of her own inevitable death.

4. **Emotional Distress.** With the death of her friend the co-researcher experienced such feeling-related phenomena as denial, anguish, longing, crying, confusion, and a sense of being overwhelmed. These feelings appeared to be experienced to varying degrees regardless of preparation for or resignation to the death of the friend. This reaction seemed to be intensified when the death was sudden or multiple stressors existed.

   Throughout her bereavement these feelings tended to be triggered by various factors for the co-researcher, including symbolic reminders of the deceased, or the acknowledgement by others of the legitimacy of her loss. Other triggers were also reported, such as dreams and moments of quiet or solitude. Several co-researchers reported that through various means an attempt was made to avoid those thoughts, events or people that would trigger such reactions.

5. **Dissonance.** The co-researcher experienced a sense of dissonance when her beliefs about the deceased or about grief reactions were in conflict with her own overt behaviors or the overt behaviors of others. This sense of discord was at times experienced as anger, frustration or revulsion in response to other persons whose reactions
were difficult for the bereaved friend to accept or tolerate. For some co-researchers such discord also occurred in terms of their personal response to the loss which was experienced as dissonant with or contrary to the way they believed they would or should have coped with such a loss; such dissonance was often experienced by the bereaved as frustration or reproach with herself.

6. **Exclusion.** The co-researcher described a sense of exclusion in the experience of her friend's loss. Such exclusion was experienced in several ways, including physical exclusion wherein the bereaved friend was impeded in being physically present with the dying friend, or during the friend's funeral. Similarly exclusion was experienced when the bereaved friend was impeded, or impeded herself, in openly discussing aspects of the impending or actual loss. Some co-researchers experienced exclusion in terms of their bereavement status itself, wherein others or they themselves denied the legitimacy of their loss, thereby limiting their access to social support.

7. **Finality.** The co-researcher was struck by the finality of death, and the fact that certain aspects of her relationship with the deceased could never be replaced.

8. **Inclusion.** The co-researcher described a sense of inclusion in her experience of coping with the loss of her friend. Such inclusion was experienced when open discussion of the impending or actual death and its implications was encouraged by the dying friend, or by others who recognized the legitimacy of the loss. For some bereaved, a sense of inclusion was also experienced by participating in the friend's dying process itself, through such acts as care-taking or carrying out the dying friend's specific wishes.

   In coping with the death of her friend, the co-researcher's sense of inclusion was further enhanced when the legitimacy of her loss and of her status as bereaved was recognized by the bereaved herself and/or by others. The co-researcher also attempted to increase the sense of inclusion for other bereaved by recognizing and acknowledging the legitimacy of their mutual loss.

9. **Integrity.** In reviewing the dying friend's response to his or her illness, the co-researcher gained awareness of the effect of such illness on her friend's integrity or adherence to a code of values. The co-researcher noted with pride the way in which her friend's integrity remained intact despite the adversity of illness. Or conversely, she recalled with sadness how such integrity had been threatened or diminished by the illness. Several co-researchers were also aware of the effect of the impending or actual death on their own integrity and their ability to live with conviction and meaning.

   Some co-researchers described a specific image of their deceased friend which symbolized that friend's serenity or vitality in the face of death. This image seemed to restore or uphold their friend's integrity, and appeared to help the bereaved manage their anguish.

10. **Intuition.** The co-researcher described a sense of knowing without external evidence that there had been a change in her friend's status or that her friend had died.

11. **Kin-like Bond.** The co-researcher used metaphorical or actual comparisons to family or kin as a means of describing the type of bond shared with the deceased friend.
12. **Meaning (search for).** The co-researchers were engaged in an active process of consciously striving to attribute cause or reason to the loss. Several informants were also engaged in an active process of finding concrete ways to grieve the loss in a way that would most honor what the deceased had meant to them. Some co-researchers believed they could not fully accept or make sense of their loss. Despite their efforts to find meaning in the death, aspects of the loss remained insensible.

13. **Ritual.** Ritual is here defined as a commemorative act which symbolically and/or metaphorically condenses into a dramatic moment one or more essential aspects of the relationship shared with the deceased. As described by Imber-Black (1988) rituals “make potentially disruptive life-cycle transitions more manageable and less threatening by enclosing them in a web of prescribed activities...they provide a safe context for the expression of intense emotion” (p. 60).

This definition appears to fit the experience of the bereaved in the present study. In an attempt to adapt to the loss of her friend, the co-researcher engaged in a private or public ceremony which both commemorated the life of her deceased friend and legitimized the loss. The co-researcher described the ritual effective in facilitating her adjustment to the loss if it symbolized the value of the deceased or her relationship with the deceased. Further, the ritual was helpful if it fit the expectations of the bereaved friend, and took place in the company of supportive others when the ritual was of a shared nature.

14. **Uniquely Individual Response.** The co-researcher was aware that aspects of her response to the loss were unique in relation to that of other bereaved or that described in models of bereavement with which she was familiar. Some co-researchers acknowledged that their response to the loss in question was in itself unique compared to other losses they had suffered because of the nature of the relationship they had shared with that friend, and the circumstances of the death.

The co-researcher also seemed to allow others, including the dying friend, autonomy in terms of their own unique response to the impending or actual loss. Although she may not have understood their unique response, the bereaved friend was generally able to tolerate it.
Appendix D

Eidetic Analysis of Anna's Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Cluster of Meaning Units</th>
<th>Thematic Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Acceptance</strong>&lt;br&gt;(MU #11, 14, 17, 18, 37, 47, 49, 60, 62, 65, 67)</td>
<td>In reference to J., with whom she had been a part of his experience of dying, Anna described a sense of acceptance in his loss. She began to accept his impending death as an alternative to his anguish over his decline. She believed J. anticipated and was at peace with his death, which made it easier for others including herself to accept the inevitability of the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Concession</strong>&lt;br&gt;(MU #6, 13, 22, 26, 27, 28)</td>
<td>Anna made concessions especially for her dying friend N. which required that she constrain open and genuine expression about his illness and death in order to allow him autonomy in how he wished to respond to the same. She would not describe this constraint typical however of her other close relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Control</strong>&lt;br&gt;(MU #48, 50, 51, 52, 59, 63, 69)</td>
<td>Anna struggled with the degree of control or influence she had in the course of each of her friend's illness and death. She questioned at times whether she did enough to support them. She wondered if her struggle with, and belief in, personal responsibility was a way of quelling her sense of vulnerability that arose when confronted with the inevitability of mortality itself.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Emotional Distress  
(MU #4, 40, 44, 46, 55, 56, 68, 69)  
Anna considered various aspects of her response to the loss of her friends to be what she perceived as common grief responses. Specifically in response to the loss of N., she experienced the anguish, sadness and sense of meaninglessness which she believed were typical aspects of bereavement. Several months after her loss, she found that certain objects or circumstances continued to trigger her anguish, especially related to the loss of N. She attempted to avoid such triggers by seeking distractions which she hoped would "magically" assist her in avoiding the pain of her loss.

5. Dissonance  
(MU #35, 38, 41, 43, 56, 61, 63)  
Anna experienced a sense of dissonance in her losses. This occurred both when her own response to the loss did not fit with her self perception, and when others' response to each loss was difficult for her to tolerate.

6. Exclusion  
(MU #5, 7, 16, 24, 26, 29, 39)  
Anna described a sense of exclusion from N's experience of illness and death. Her sadness was intensified by her awareness that despite her knowledge of his terminal illness, they did not discuss it or its implications until his impending death was obvious. She also experienced a physical separation from him. As his illness advanced, N. chose to move away to later die at his parents' home in another city, leaving no specific expectations of his friends regarding his wishes or needs during his illness and
Anna was confronted by the finality or irreversibility of death.

Anna described a sense of inclusion in J's experience of illness and dying through to his death. Through their open discussions, she was aware of what was expected and desired by her dying friend J., a factor which appeared to minimize her confusion in terms of her response to his loss. Recognition of her loss and of her status as bereaved was an important factor in Anna's experience. In recognizing herself as bereaved and in other's recognition of her as such, her sense of inclusion was greatly enhanced. She felt entitled to receive support for as well as openly express her response to the loss of both N. and J.

Anna was aware of the effect of illness on the integrity of her dying friends. Their sense of self and adherence to a way of being either remained intact despite the adversity of illness, or conversely was diminished by it.

She was also aware of the effect of her losses on her own integrity. She believed that despite her pain the intensity of her grief would neither damage nor diminish her.

Anna had an intuitive sense that her friend J. would die before her next visit with him. It was a more certain
11. Kin-like Bond
(MU #2, 25, 27, 41)

Anna described a kin-like relationship with her friend N., with whom she was so close that she and others described the two of them as twins.

12. Meaning
(MU #12, 42, 44, 46, 57, 58, 60, 64)

Though she had no unanswered questions about J's death, she found herself searching for a means of making sense of the loss of N. She hoped for someone to provide an explanation for her that would quell her pain, yet realized the futility of this desire in light of her belief that she could not make sense of N's death because death itself did not make sense.

13. Ritual
(MU #23, 31, 32, 34, 39, 40, 41)

In her attempt to cope with the loss of her friends, Anna found that personally meaningful rituals were important in the process. She found the rite meaningful if it symbolically represented the deceased, her personal relationship with the deceased, or her expectations of what a commemorative ceremony should be.

14. Uniquely Individual Response
(MU #3, 11, 15, 21, 23, 36, 41, 43, 45, 57, 63, 70)

Anna experienced her response to the loss of N. and that of J. a uniquely individual. She also experienced this individuality of response in relation to others who were also grieving the loss of her friends.

Anna was generally able to tolerate others' unique responses to the losses of her friends. She also
experienced this tolerance from other bereaved individuals, especially in terms of the way she responded to the loss of N.
## Thematic Cluster of Meaning Units

### 1. Acceptance
(MU #20, 23, 26, 38, 47, 48, 58, 60, 64, 66)

Carla described her loss of S. as a gradual process of deterioration wherein S. finally achieved her own death. Though Carla did not indiscriminantly disclose her resignation to the inevitability of S's death, her anguish over this loss brought her to a place where she began to accept S's fate well before her actual death. Two years after her friend's death, Carla believed she was finally at peace with S's loss, and could speak about her loss without anguish.

### 2. Concession
(MU #14, 25, 51, 64, 67, 68, 71)

Carla maintained her support for S. in the face of an illness that others found disturbing, and in spite of S's diminished ability to be an equal partner in their friendship. She believed she was able to do so both as a result of her knowledge of psychiatry and the bond that she had shared with S. Further, despite her inability to condone S's final choice of means by which to end her life, Carla was eventually able to accept S's act by attributing her motive to desperation rather than selfishness.

### 3. Control
(MU #39, 42, 44, 46)

Carla struggled at times with her actual ability, and culpability, in terms of influencing her friend's fate. Though she acknowledged that thoughts
about her responsibility may recur, she was comforted in knowing that everything that could have been done was done to save S.

Carla recognized similarities between aspects of her own response to loss and that outlined in a conventional model of grief with which she was familiar.

In reflecting on her response to S's loss, she described having experienced in her bereavement a sense of shock and disbelief, and an intense sense of anguish and longing.

Initially uncertain of the legitimacy of her anguish, Carla attempted to diminish her pain by diminishing the importance of her loss. In the first several months after her friend's death she found that thoughts of S's painful struggle with life dominated her memory of her friend. She also found that her sense of anguish had a tendency to be triggered unexpectedly during times when she was alone or engaged in tasks which did not require her total concentration.

Constraining herself from speaking to others about her loss was experienced as dissonant for Carla, who perceived herself to be otherwise instrumental in forthrightly discussing and resolving issues. She also experienced discord with others, including S. herself, in their response to S's illness and death.

In the first several months following the death of her friend, Carla described a sense of exclusion of
isolation in her bereavement experience. This exclusion was generated primarily by her belief that the meaning and extent of her loss would not be understood by others. As a result, she initially spoke with no one about her response to the death of her good friend.

When Carla recognized that her friend would never again be there to share birthdays and other special times, she experienced loneliness and longed for someone with whom she could share her sadness about the finality of her loss. Though she had friends who met other needs, she realized that the unique history and characteristics that typified her bond with S. were irreplaceably gone.

Carla felt included in S's experience of illness. She spent much time with S. during her unstable periods, offering support and hope for her recovery. Though infrequent, she also had the opportunity to discuss with her own parents and another mutually close friend to S. her experience of S's illness and death.

In the initial months after S's death, Carla struggled with recognizing herself as legitimately bereaved. Upon acknowledging the legitimacy of her loss, she made a marked effort to legitimize the experience of loss of 2 other friends also grieving the loss of S., acknowledging their entitlement to support.

This recognition of the extent of her loss and of her status as bereaved was an important factor in Carla's experience of loss. She believed that those who did not know S. while she
was healthy would not understand the meaning of her loss. Consequently, receiving support from such individuals was unexpected but cherished.

9. Integrity
(MU #5, 15, 16, 18, 19, 23, 24, 26, 48, 64, 65)

Carla was saddened in watching her friend become diminished and destabilized by her disease. She was angered by S's final choice of means by which to end her life and found it difficult to condone given the integrity she believed S had at one time possessed. During S's open casket funeral Carla refused to view her friend lying in state, choosing instead to remember S for her vitality and companionship.

She believed the illness had also diminished the integrity of their friendship. As such she attempted to maintain the friendship's integrity by avoiding the use of her professional psychiatric knowledge to influence S during their time together.

10. Intuition
(MU #1, 2, 12, 53)

Before receiving news of S's death, Carla had a strong sense that she and her family should return home early from their holidays. Though she found it unnerving, she believed the close bond that they had shared inexplicably drew her home for the funeral.

11. Meaning
(MU #6, 25, 26, 42, 43, 44, 45)

Carla struggled to make sense of S's death and the means by which S had attained that end. This search for meaning was compelling, and seemed to be driven at times at an unconscious level. She also described the occurrence of
certain unlikely events which she believed helped her to make sense of aspects of the loss with which she had been struggling.

Carla found the formal ritual of S's funeral unsettling as it failed to eulogize and thus represent the positive effects S. had had on the lives of Carla and others. In contrast, the evening spent with bereaved friends after the funeral was for Carla a more fitting ritual because it involved personal remembrances of S., and took place in the company of supportive others. This latter ritual was an important opportunity for Carla to openly share her pain and have it acknowledged. She also created private rituals in order to further assist her adjustment to her loss and to honor the life of her friend.

Carla was aware that some aspects of her response to S's loss were unique in relation to a conventional model of loss with which she was familiar. Because she had resigned herself to the loss well before S's death, she believed her experience of such responses as shock and disbelief were atypical when compared to their conventional description. She also recognized and tolerated the individuality of other bereaved in terms of their response to the loss of S.
## Appendix F
### Eidetic Analysis of Diane's Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Cluster of Meaning Units</th>
<th>Thematic Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Acceptance</strong>&lt;br&gt;(MU #8, 9, 15, 25, 61, 62, 65, 68, 69, 71, 74)</td>
<td>J's life was ended by a terminal illness which was contracted while being treated for a life-long chronic illness. His resignation to death and long-standing courage in the face of its inevitability facilitated Diane's acceptance of his impending death. With the deaths of her mother and especially her grandmother, she witnessed what she described as an awe-inspiring sense of spirituality incorporating a sense of peace or joy in death. She sensed this mystery especially in the death of her friend J.H., in whose dying process she was most intensely involved and with whose death she was most immediately resolved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Concession</strong>&lt;br&gt;(MU #57, 65)</td>
<td>In her intense involvement with the dying process of J.H., her most recent loss, Diane impeded herself from enjoying her own life. She felt that amidst his suffering she could not continue to enjoy life and live fully. Because she did not want to burden him with her own sorrow she made a further concession and resolved not to cry in his presence. Though she did not regret her concessions she believed she paid a toll for her intense support in having impeded her own experience of joy before his death.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Control
(MU #10, 22, 37, 46, 51, 54, 75, 77)
Diane struggled with issues of control especially around the sudden losses of her friends J. and D. Though she was resolved to J's inevitable death, she found herself unprepared for how suddenly his death actually occurred. Her sense of vulnerability was intensified by her struggle to cope with the failing health of her father and grandmother, and the impending death of the latter.

Some years later she is again confronted with such vulnerability in terms of mortality by the sudden death of her friend D.

4. Emotional Distress
(MU #3, 5, 6, 22, 37, 52, 65, 66)
Diane described her response to the loss of A. as one in which she felt overwhelmed by the unfamiliar confrontation with death. She remained in a state of denial for an extended period of time after his death.

With the death of her friend J., she again experienced a sense of being overwhelmed as his death had coincided with the failing health of both her grandmother and father.

Several years later, after the sudden death of her friend D., Diane described having experienced primarily a sense of shock and disbelief with his loss. She struggled for some time with the seeming meaninglessness of his death, and recognized that her struggle was due in part to being completely unprepared for his death.

And with the most recent loss of her friend J. H. she described an intense and continual sense of anguish, much of which she experienced while caring for
5. Dissonance
(MU #1, 17, 21, 38, 40, 42, 44, 49)

Diane's experience of the loss of her friend A. was characterized in part by dissonance. At that early part in her life she was unfamiliar with death and had not yet acknowledged the reality of mortality. Later, with the death of her friend J. she again experienced dissonance, not with the reality of death itself but rather with the way in which his life may have ended. She had been inspired by J's courage and determination in the face of his chronic and terminal illnesses, and in light of this stoicism she had great difficulty resolving the fact that he may have taken his own life.

With the death of her friend D., her experience of sudden loss is shaped by her intense rage with another mourner whose exploitative actions impinged on the abilities of Diane and other bereaved to openly and fully experience and share their grief.

6. Exclusion
(MU #2, 36, 48, 50, 56)

Diane described a sense of exclusion in her experience of the loss of A. She felt unable to be with him during the acute illness that led to his death, and experienced disappointment in herself for this self-imposed exclusion for a long period of time after his death.

She again experienced a sense of exclusion with the sudden death of her friend D. In having had no time to prepare for his loss she believed she was prevented from accessing the spiritual feedback that was necessary
for her to resolve his loss. Her initial experience with the impending loss of J.H. was characterized by exclusion. She had been aware of his terminal illness well before he disclosed it to her and during this interim she felt impeded in her need to openly discuss with him his impending death and its implications.

Diane experienced a sense of inclusion in J's process of dying. They openly discussed his impending death and what it meant for each of them. Her experience of the loss of J.H. was also one of inclusion. Open discussion of his illness and impending death was ongoing between them, and she was intensely involved in his care to the very end of his dying process.

Recognition of her loss and of her status as bereaved was an important factor in Diane's adjustment to each of her losses. With each death she acknowledged the extent and significance of the loss through the act of reviewing who her friend had been in life and what he had meant to her. With each of her losses she considered herself legitimately bereaved.

Despite the life-long chronic and terminal illnesses that ended J's life, she was inspired by his courage and adherence to a purpose of being. She again witnessed in the illness and death of her friend J.H. this same integrity which remained
intact despite the adversity of a debilitating illness. And though his loss was extremely painful, her own integrity remained intact throughout his dying process. She experienced pride in her ability to be there for him and offer support in spite of her own pain.

9. Intuition  
(MU # 59, 62)
Before departing on a holiday, Diane experienced with J.H. a strong sense of his imminent death, and believed he would die while she was away. Her intuition was later confirmed.

10. Meaning  
(MU #7, 8, 17, 20, 46, 50, 51, 68, 69, 72)
Especially in her first experiences with the loss of a close friend, Diane struggled to make sense of their deaths. With the death of her friend A. she was emotionally overwhelmed by his loss and was unable to make sense of her experience until after the death of her own mother. Later with the deaths of her friends J. and then D. she struggled to find meaning more in the way in which these friends died rather than in the deaths themselves. Her most recent loss of her close friend J.H. has been one with which despite her anguish she has struggled less to find meaning in the death. After a long and agonizing struggle with illness, Diane realized that in death J.H. had found joy.

11. Ritual  
(MU #41, 43, 51, 73)
In her attempt to adapt to her losses, Diane found important the creation of personally meaningful rituals. As a means of doing something positive
with her anguish related to the loss of D., she helped to create a memorial fund which would assist in the administration of an annual workshop offered in his area of speciality. She found such public commemoration helpful also in adjusting to the deaths of her friend J.H. and her grandmother, and donated gifts to the community in honor of their memory.
# Appendix G

## Eidetic Analysis of Natasha's Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Cluster of Meaning Units</th>
<th>Thematic Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Acceptance</strong>&lt;br&gt;(MU # 7, 10, 11, 41, 46)</td>
<td>In the months before L's death, Natasha had resigned herself to the inevitability of her loss. When the news of L's death arrived Natasha experienced sadness, but also relief in that death was a positive alternative to the months and years of suffering that L. had endured. Though she asserted a need to bring some final closure to the process of grieving L's loss, Natasha wondered if she had not already experienced the depth of grief for L. that she believed she essentially would experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Concession</strong>&lt;br&gt;(MU #9, 13)</td>
<td>Natasha conceded that the superficiality of their last contact actually characterized much of her relationship with L. Yet her loyalty remained constant to her dying friend. Natasha realized that her friendship with L. had been sustained throughout their lives by a bond which remained intact despite their physical distance and often very different perspectives in life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Control</strong>&lt;br&gt;(MU # 4, 8)</td>
<td>Natasha questioned whether more could have been done to have saved L's life. She also struggled with her own ability to have influenced the course of her friend's illness and her painful process of dying.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Emotional Distress
(MU #3, 5, 10, 38, 39)

Natasha experienced a sense of shock upon hearing that her friend L. was ill with recurrent cancer, and had been so for 2-3 years by the time the news was disclosed to her. With this disclosure she also experienced an overwhelming and simultaneous sense of sadness and anger.

Upon receiving word that L. had died, Natasha described a sense of numbness, part of which was a mixture of sadness that L.'s life had ended, and relief that her struggle with illness was finally over.

5. Dissonance
(MU #7,16)

Natasha experienced a sense of dissonance with others whose response to the loss of L. was difficult for her to tolerate. In light of her need to openly acknowledge the impending loss of L. and what that meant to her, she experienced great frustration with others, including L., who continued to deny the reality of L.'s death despite its imminency.

6. Exclusion
(MU #3, 6, 16, 23, 26, 28, 29, 36)

Natasha's first experience of the loss of a close friend is characterized predominantly by a sense of exclusion. After the illness and death of her best friend in childhood, Natasha was denied access to attending the funeral. The significance of her loss was not recognized by others, and she was effectively excluded from bereavement status.

She again describes a sense of exclusion in adulthood with the death of her friend L. Natasha was unaware of the recurrence of
her friend's cancer until it was very advanced. By the time Natasha saw L., her friend was so close to death that she was no longer present or accessible to Natasha. Her sense of exclusion is heightened after L's death when she attempts to disclose her struggle over L's loss to L's sister, with whom Natasha had also been close. The sister's response to Natasha's pain had the effect of invalidating it, indicating to Natasha that she would be impeded in further discussing her loss with L's sister.

7. Finality
(MU #14)

In acknowledging aspects of the meaning of L's loss, Natasha was confronted by the finality of death.

8. Inclusion
(MU #8, 14, 15, 17, 18, 44, 47)

Natasha's most treasured memory of her final visit with L. was that of massaging L's feet. This final and only visit with L. before her death allowed Natasha a sense of inclusion. She gained a sense of being able to participate in and ease L's dying process. Her sense of inclusion in terms of being enabled to openly discuss her experience of loss was later influenced by her participation in her support group, as well as the development of her relationship with L's daughter K.

Natasha found the freedom in her support group to fully express what the loss of L. had meant for her. In so doing, she came to recognize the extent of her loss and the legitimacy of her bereavement status.
9. Integrity 
(MU #13)

Natasha was aware of the effect of illness on the integrity of her dying friend L. She reflected on the number of years her friend had suffered with her recurring illness, and was struck by L's courage to battle for her life for so long.

10. Kin-like Bond 
(MU #44)

Natasha realized that her experience of the loss of L. may have been intertwined with grieving the loss of the ideal natural family which she felt she never had.

11. Meaning 
(MU #12, 21, 22, 30, 35, 40, 42, 45, 46)

In her attempt to cope with her losses, Natasha searched not only for a means of making sense of those losses, but also for a way to grieve the death of her friends that would honor the meaning their lives had embodied. Aspects of L's death, including the meaning of her loss, still remain unresolved for Natasha.

12. Ritual 
(MU #13, 22, 24, 25, 27, 31, 33)

Natasha believed the creation of a meaningful ritual enabled her to honor the meaning of the deceased. The development of such rituals was also accompanied by the creation of artworks and writings related to the deceased, which allowed her to further resolve her feelings related to her losses.

13. Uniquely Individual Response 
(MU #7, 20, 30, 46)

Natasha questioned whether her response to loss itself was unique in relation to the way in which other bereaved individuals respond to such loss. Further, based on the depth of her
relationship with L., she questioned whether her response to the loss of L. would be unique in relation to her response to losses which she may suffer in the future.
### Appendix H

#### Themes Common to the Experience of all Co-Researchers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Anna</th>
<th>Carla</th>
<th>Diane</th>
<th>Natasha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Acceptance</td>
<td>MU#11,14, 17, 18, 37, 47, 49, 60, 62, 65, 67</td>
<td>MU#20, 23, 26, 38, 47, 48, 58, 60, 64, 66</td>
<td>MU#8, 9, 15, 25, 47, 65, 68, 69, 71, 74</td>
<td>MU#7, 10, 11, 41, 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Concession</td>
<td>MU#6, 13, 22, 26, 27, 28</td>
<td>MU#14, 25, 51, 64, 67, 68, 71</td>
<td>MU#57, 65</td>
<td>MU#9, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Control</td>
<td>MU#48, 50, 51, 52, 59, 63, 69</td>
<td>MU#39, 42, 44, 46</td>
<td>MU#18, 22, 37, 46, 51</td>
<td>MU#4, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Emotional Distress</td>
<td>MU#4, 40, 44, 46, 55, 56, 68, 69</td>
<td>MU#3, 10, 11, 21, 22, 29, 30, 34, 50, 57, 58, 59, 64, 79</td>
<td>MU#3, 5, 6, 10, 38, 39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dissonance</td>
<td>MU#35, 38, 41, 43, 56, 61, 63</td>
<td>MU#17, 24, 26, 35, 36, 55, 68, 71</td>
<td>MU#1, 17, 21, 38, 40, 42, 44, 49</td>
<td>MU#7, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Exclusion</td>
<td>MU#5, 7, 16, 24, 26, 29, 39</td>
<td>MU#8, 9, 27, 33, 34, 36, 37, 40, 45, 62, 69, 80</td>
<td>MU#2, 36, 48, 50, 56, 16, 23, 26, 28, 29, 36</td>
<td>MU#3, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Inclusion</td>
<td>MU#8, 9, 10, 17, 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, 33, 37, 44, 54, 57</td>
<td>MU#6, 7, 9, 28, 32, 40, 41, 56, 59, 61, 69, 75, 77</td>
<td>MU#14, 16, 20, 39, 43, 51, 55, 57, 58, 60, 66, 69, 75, 77</td>
<td>MU#8, 14, 15, 17, 18, 44, 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Integrity</td>
<td>MU#17, 29, 31, 36, 37, 53, 66</td>
<td>MU#5, 15, 16, 18, 19, 23, 24, 26, 48, 64, 65</td>
<td>MU#15, 19, 23, 51, 55, 58, 64, 67, 70, 74, 76</td>
<td>MU#13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Meaning</td>
<td>MU#12, 42, 44, 46, 57, 58, 60, 64</td>
<td>MU#6, 25, 26, 42, 43, 44, 45</td>
<td>MU#7, 8, 17, 20, 46, 50, 51, 68, 69, 72</td>
<td>MU#12, 21, 22, 30, 35, 40, 42, 45, 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Ritual</td>
<td>MU#23, 31, 32, 34, 39, 40, 41</td>
<td>MU#4, 29, 31, 54, 70, 72, 74, 76</td>
<td>MU#41, 43, 51, 73, 24, 25, 27, 31, 33</td>
<td>MU#13, 22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MU# indicates the codes assigned to each experience mention.